DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 124 936 CS 202 742

AUTHOR Coppola, Carlo, Ed.
TITLE Marxist Influences and South Asian Literature. South Asia Series Occasional Paper No. 23, Vol. I.
INSTITUTION Michigan State Univ., East Lansing. Asian Studies Center.
PUB DATE 74
NOTE 213p.

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$11.37 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Asian Studies; Bengali; *Conference Reports; Fiction; Hindi; *Literary Analysis; Literary Genres; *Literary Influences; *Literature; Poetry; Realism; *Socialism; Urdu
IDENTIFIERS All India Progressive Writers Association; *Marxism

ABSTRACT

This document presents papers dealing with various aspects of Marxist literary influence, and more specifically socialist realism, in India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. Included are articles that deal with such subjects as the All-India Progressive Writers' Association, creative writers in Urdu, Bengali poets today, Indian poetry in English and socialist realism, socialist realism and the Indian novel in English, the novelist Mulk Raj Anand, the poet Jhaverchand Meghani, aspects of the socialist realist verse of Sundaram and Umashankar Joshi, socialist realism and Hindi novels, socialist realism in modern Hindi poetry, Mohan Rakesh and socialist realism, and the evolution of Yashpal from socialist realist to humanist. (TS)

****
* Documents acquired by ERIC include many informal unpublished *
* materials not available from other sources. ERIC makes every effort *
* to obtain the best copy available. Nevertheless, items of marginal *
* reproducibility are often encountered and this affects the quality *
* of the microfiche and hardcopy reproductions ERIC makes available *
* via the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). EDRS is not *
* responsible for the quality of the original document. Reproductions *
* supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made from the original. *
****

ED124936

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH,
EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

FEB 16 1976

MARXIST INFLUENCES AND SOUTH ASIAN LITERATURE

Volume I

South Asia Series Occasional Paper No. 23

Winter 1974

Published by

Asian Studies Center
Michigan State University
East Lansing, Michigan

CARLO COPPOLA
EDITOR

CS 202 742

CONTENTS

VOLUME I

FOREWORD 1

THE ALL-INDIA PROGRESSIVE WRITERS' ASSOCIATION: THE EUROPEAN PHASE
Carlo Coppola 1

THE PROGRESSIVE WRITERS' MOVEMENT AND CREATIVE WRITERS IN URDU
Ahmed Ali 35

A PERSONAL VIEW OF THE PROGRESSIVE WRITERS' MOVEMENT
Prabhakar Machwe 45

BENGALI POETS TODAY: THE CONFLICT OF SELF AND THE WORLD
Amitendranath Tagore 55

INDIAN POETRY IN ENGLISH AND SOCIALIST REALISM
R. K. Kaushik 61

SOCIALIST REALISM AND THE INDIAN NOVEL IN ENGLISH
R. K. Kaushik 89

MULK RAJ ANAND: THE NOVELIST AS NOVELIST
Marlene Fisher 117

JHAVERCHAND MEGHANI: THE PEOPLE'S POET
Gopalan V. Gopalan 131

ASPECTS OF THE SOCIALIST REALIST VERSE OF SUNDARAM AND UMASHANKAR JOSHI
Panna Naik 147

SOCIALIST REALISM AND HINDI NOVELS
Yogendra K. Malik 159

SOCIALIST REALISM IN MODERN HINDI POETRY
Anjani Kumar Sinha 177

COMMENT ON MOHAN RAKESH AND SOCIALIST REALISM
Frederick W. Blackwell 193

THE EVOLUTION OF YASHPAL FROM SOCIALIST REALIST TO HUMANIST
Corinne Friend 201

FOREWORD

It is obvious to any student of modern South Asian literatures that Marxism, together with its literary handmaiden, Socialist Realism, has left a profound impression on both the form and content of these literatures. While there are a number of studies in the individual languages dealing with Marxism and its effects on that particular literature, there is not, to my knowledge, a study, either in a South Asian language or in English, which traces the development of this esthetics in its various guises across linguistic boundries on the subcontinent. Allusions to the fact that all, or nearly all, South Asian literatures were affected in varying degrees and for varying lengths of time by Marxism are plentiful; the "hows," "whys," and "wherefores" are generally left unanswered.

This collection, then, is a small start -- the merest drop in the proverbial bucket -- towards answering these questions on an all-South Asia level. It is hoped that these essays will prompt other scholars to pick up where we have left off and to proceed in such a way as to produce a full, comprehensive picture of the effects of Marxism in the literatures of South Asia. Hopefully, we will not have to wait too long for such a picture to emerge.

The immediate genesis of this volume was a panel entitled "Socialist Realism in the South Asian Context" held at the Twenty-Fourth Annual Meeting of the Association for Asian Studies held in New York on 29 March 1972. As organizer and chairman for the panel, I solicited a total of forty papers dealing with various aspects of Marxist literary influence, and more specifically Socialist Realism, in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. Clearly such a large number of papers could not be accomodated at the meeting itself. However, those which could be presented would serve as a nucleus for a collection which would later be published. In soliciting these papers I tried to keep a number of points in mind. First, that as many South Asian languages as possible should be represented. Hence, at least one, and in some cases two or more, articles were solicited from scholars not only for the United States and South Asia, but from Europe and Canada as well. In most instances, a broad survey article was sought from one scholar, then another was asked to write a piece on a more particular genre or even on a particular author. The most successful set in this arrangement, as it turned out, were those dealing with Hindi literature.

The second point considered was that as many diverse points of view should be represented: Marxist, non-Marxist, anti-Marxist, etc. Hence, scholars with widely divergent points of view -- including the then highest-ranking member of the Indian Progressive Writers' Association, the late Sajjad Zaheer, and the foremost American Marxist historian -- were asked to participate either with papers or as discussants.

A third point was that not only scholars, but writers who were actually involved in the leftist literary movements in South Asia, should be approached for pieces. Hence, major literary figures, among them Ahmed Ali and Prabhakar Machwe, were asked to submit articles which, it was understood, would take the form of reminiscences or memoirs.

Lastly, I felt that not only literature, but other artistic genres -- such as theatre, films and painting -- should also be treated in this same general context. Hence, specialists in each of these areas were approached.

Since nearly everyone asked to write a paper agreed to do so, the situation seemed ideal. However, as the deadline for papers approaches, not even half of those promised arrived. In addition, a number of participants with what could be termed Marxist views either withdrew or simply refused to communicate further on the question of the panel and papers for it. Thus the gaps which appear in this collection are not the result of a lack of perspective or good intentions, of careful planning or foresight, but were the result of something else. Hopefully some of these other "promised" essays will appear at some later date, for, indeed, one would like to know about Marxist influences in Tamil, Kannada and Oriya, one would be interested in learning of the Socialist Realist elements in the poetry of Qazi Nasrul Islam, Samar Sen and the Bengali Naxalite poets; one would like to be able to connect Socialist Realism in Malayalam to the short stories of Muhammad Bashir; in addition, one would like to be informed of the Marxist aspects of the film songs of Sahir Ludhianvi and the movie scripts of Khwaja Ahmed Abbas, etc., etc. In the meantime, we do have in the articles presented here a wealth of information, facts and interpretations regarding Marxism and Socialist Realism in South Asian literature.

Originally, this collection was to have been entitled "Socialist Realism in the South Asian Context," the same name as the New York AAS panel. However, the nature and scope of these papers are not confined strictly to the literary doctrine of Socialist Realism, but, in fact, address themselves for the most part to the larger, broader phenomena of Marxism and Marxist influences. Hence, the present title.

In arranging these articles for publication, several conflicting criteria were used. First, the good manners of the editor might be called into question for having placed his article first. This piece on the earliest phases of the Progressive Writers' Association does, however, lend a historical perspective to the Movement and to much of what is said in subsequent articles. Because Ahmed Ali and Prabhakar Machwe were associated with the Progressive Writers' Association either directly or tangentially, their articles have been set apart from the others as primary sources rather than as pieces of scholarship. The remainder of the articles are categorized according to the language group with which they deal. Within this rubric, the more general article has been placed first, followed by the more specific. If this criterion was not applicable, then the articles under the language were listed alphabetically according to the author's last name. The language groups were then alphabetized in the manner commonly used by South Asian literary publications and bibliographical

sources, starting with Bengali and ending with Urdu. Following the articles are the discussions presented by Irene Gilbert and Mary Lago. For the sake of interest, I have also included at the end the roster from the Association of Asian Studies panel.

That a variety of schemes -- some more scholarly and more accurate than others -- has been used in transliterating vernacular works, titles, names, etc. is readily apparent. Similarly, a range of footnote and bibliographical styles have also been employed in the various articles. My initial impulse (compulsion?) was to ask all contributors to regularize footnotes and transliterations according to a single model. Such an idea, while rather engaging from an editorial perspective, proved to be not only highly impractical from the points of view of time and the editor's sanity, but also cruel and unjust to contributors upon whom I had already imposed rather heavily with demands for revisions, expansions, deadlines and other such requests. Hence, the schemes of transliteration and footnoting sometimes varies from article to article; an attempt was made, however, to regularize all such scholarly impedimenta within each article. In this context, I wish to express sincere thanks and gratitude to my friends and colleagues, Steven M. Poulos and Marilyn Wilcox, whose invaluable assistance in preparing this collection went beyond the limits not only of solid literary scholarship, but of friendship and human tolerance as well.

Rejoinders to, further discussion about, and additional elucidation of materials contained in these essays would be most welcomed by the contributors and by the editor.

Carlo Coppola
Editor

Oakland University
1 October 1973

THE ALL-INDIA PROGRESSIVE WRITERS' ASSOCIATION: THE EUROPEAN PHASE

Carlo Coppola

Oakland University

The All-India Progressive Writers' Association (AIPWA), which spearheaded nearly all of the Marxist-oriented literary activities on the Indian subcontinent, has been described as the "most important front organization created for specifical professional groups" by the Communist Party of India (CPI).[1] The major figure in the development of this organization has been, until recently the late, Syed Sajjad Zaheer. His importance is not so much as a creative writer -- for he is found seriously wanting in this respect -- but rather in various subsidiary capacities: first, as a focal point or pivot around which the AIPWA developed; second, as a liaison between this organization and the CPI; and third, as a chronicler of the AIPWA, particularly in its earliest phases. Born in Lucknow is 1905, he is the son of the late Sir Syed Wazir Hasan, a judge of the High Court of Judicature Allahabad. Zaheer studied at Lucknow University and received a bachelor's degree from Oxford in 1932.

In the same year, he edited and published an anthology of Urdu short stories entitled *Angāre* (Embers) (Lucknow: Sajjad Zaheer, [1932]), which contained some of his pieces, as well as contributions by several young writers who became known collectively as the *Angāre* Group.[2] Authors included Ahmed Ali, who has since published several volumes of Urdu short stories, as well as works in English.[3] His major piece is the novel, *Twilight in Delhi* (London: Hogarth Press, 1940). After the establishment of Pakistan in 1947, he was that country's first ambassador to China. He has also published a second English novel, *Ocean of Night* (London: Peter Owen, 1964). Rashid Jahan is the single most important woman in the early phase of the Progressive Movement, as the group which grew out of the publication of this volume came to be called. A doctor by profession and a woman of a particularly strong-willed, liberated sort, she also wrote stories and radio plays which have been collected under the title *Aurat aur dūgar afsāne* (Woman and Other Stories) (Lahore: Hashmi Book Depot n.d.). She died of cancer in Moscow in 1952. Her husband, Mahmuduzzafar, was a member of the royal family of the Nawab of Rampur. Educated almost entirely in England, he was unable to speak or write Urdu very well upon returning to India. In India he spent most of his time as a Communist Party organizer. His literary activities during this period, while relatively restricted, were in part an attempt to recoup and resuscitate this lost language. His works have not been published in any collected form.

Copies of *Angāre* are not presently available;[4] however, both primary and secondary sources make constant allusions to it. In his reminiscences, for example, Sajjad Zaheer speaks of the anthology in connection with his play, *Bīmār* (The Sick Man), which he wrote in London and read to the study group of Indian students which he helped organize and which eventually developed into the Indian Progressive Writers' Association. "After the stories published in the anthology, *The Embers*, this [play] was my first work. . . . The fame of

The Embers had reached the Indians in London. I was happy that my first literary effort had shocked the old, bearded fogeys."[5] Here, Zaheer refers to the fact that the United Provinces State Government proscribed the book after its publication, due to pressure directed against it by older religious and political leaders.

In writing a memorial tribute to Rashid Jahan, an author calling himself "A Friend" states the following about her contribution to this collection entitled *Dillī kī sair* (Delhi Excursion):

> For, apart from the boldness of the stories by the male writers who defied religion and poked fun at their elders, the direct protest against the male sex, particularly the Indian husband, which Rashid Jahan delivered did a great deal to provoke the males and concentrated their ire against the authoress.[6]

"A Friend" describes the results of the publication of this volume as follows:

> The intensity of the scandal created by *Angaray* (for the book was banned by the U.P. [United Provinces] Government and the Mullahs wanted to burn it) was a measure of the fact that the protest had struck deep in the layers of the congealed hearts of the feudal order.[7]

Another view of this book and the resulting proscription is offered by Aziz Ahmad, the distinguished historian of Islam in India, Urdu novelist and critic. He states that *Angāre* was "the declaration of war by the youth of the middle class" against the prevailing social, political and religious institutions.[8] He also calls *Angāre* "the first ferocious attack on society" in modern Urdu literature.[9] The importance of this volume, in spite of its "thousand defects," is that it exposed "the stink of familial and sexual life" in modern Indian society.[10] The book also attacked certain religious aspects of Muslin society. "The age-old false enamel of the past civilization was exposed in various places. The false religiosity of mullahs (in which faith had no part, which deceived itself and others, and of which Iqbal had also complained in many places) was exposed with great force."[11]

The book, according to Aziz Ahmad, sought only to destroy rather than create; hence, it lacks true literary merit.

> The greatest defect of *Angāre* was the absence of circumspection and unprincipled extremism. For this reason, the destructive object of the book was fulfilled; but it could not achieve anything constructive. It is certainly reactionary to screen capitalism behind religion, but the unprincipled attack on religion, which even Socialist Rationalism cannot condone, and insults to the Divine

> Being were in no way authorized (philosophers acknowledge His existence; non-Transcendentalism [*lā-avariyat*] does not deny Him, and even if He is not accepted by atheism or materialism, He is not showered with abuses, and other peoples' view [regarding Him] are respected).[12]

He further asserts that the Progressive Movement would have flourished in Urdu earlier than it did had not the *Angāre* Group struck as strident and radical a chord as it did. In addition, he suggests that many more writers would have rallied to the Progressive cause than actually did had the *Angāre* writers been more positive and constructive in their outlook. As it happened, many writers rejected the Movement because of *Angāre*'s "departure from the limits of moderation (which was unnecessary), and lack of balance."[13]

A younger critic-poet, Khalilur Rahman Azmi, whose work in the area of Progressive literature in Urdu is the most profound and comprehensive to date, describes these young authors as "hot-blooded," then states:

> Revolutionary and rebellious ideas had burst forth in these stories like a storm. These authors showed that youthful enthusiasm, lack of moderation, boldness and rebelliousness which were common among the young students of the period. For this reason, the tone of satire and scorn against the prevalent morality and religious doctrine has become very prominent in these stories. The publication of this book produced a great stir among the traditionalists and protest against it was so great that the Government confiscated this collection.[14]

While the collection has dubious literary merit per se, Azmi is of the opinion that the book's importance lies in the fact that it was a harbinger of things to come in Urdu literature: "The publication of this collection was indicative of the fact that certain intellectual and emotional changes were taking place among Indian youth which our literature would have to contend with very soon."[15]

One of these particular changes which Azmi alludes to above took place while Sajjad Zaheer was studying in England. As Jawaharlal Nehru and many other English-educated Indians before him, Zaheer acquired a thorough grounding in Marxism while a student at Oxford, and later while he studied for the bar in London. He states that both he and members of his group

> were gradually drifting towards socialism. Our minds searched for a philosophy which would help us understand and solve the different social problems. We were not satisfied with the idea that humanity had always been miserable and would also remain so. We read Marx and other socialist writers with great enthusiasm, solved the historical and philosophical problems through mutual discussion. Our minds became clear and our hearts contented.[16]

Like many writers in Western Europe and America during this period, Zaheer was deeply concerned with political events in Germany and their consequences on the lives of people, especially Communists.

> The political effect of the economic crisis that engulfed the world took in Germany the shape of the dictatorship of Hitler and his Nazi Party. In London and Paris we daily came across the miserable refugees who had escaped or were exiled from Germany. Everywhere one could hear the painful stories of fascist repression. Fascist ruffians were torturing the freedom-loving people and the communists in a thousand different ways. The ghastly picture of the beloved leaders of the people with the blue weals of whips on their backs and seats; the terrible acts of beheading of well-known communist leaders periodically published in the newspapers; the painful darkness which, spreading from the bright world of art and learning that was Germany was throwing its fearful shadow on Europe -- all this had shattered the inner tranquility of our hearts and minds.[17]

The exposure to Marxism, the political situation in Germany, the fact that they were, for the most part, students, and their desire to become writers, all contributed in varying degrees to a sense among them that they should form some sort of literary association. Writing, claims Zaheer, was probably the only avenue left open to them. "Most of the members of our small group wanted to become writers. What else could they do? We were incapable of manual labour. We had not learnt any craft and our minds revolted against serving the imperialist government. What other field was left?"[18]

Acting as a catalyst to bring about the formal organization was the British leftist writer Ralph Fox. Zaheer had met Fox through their connection with the various leftist literary groups found in London at the time. Zaheer describes one of his meetings with Fox, who offered the enthusiastic young writer a warning:

> One day I invited him [Fox] to a dinner at my room to talk about the Progressive Writers' Association. A Bengali friend of mine cooked a dish which was something between *khichri* and *pulao*. Fox ate it with great relish. Till late he talked about his plan to visit India. In the course of the discussion regarding literature, he again and again warned us that our enthusiasm for progressivism must not degenerate into sectarianism and prejudice. When a Bengali friend of ours criticised Tagore for being a representative of [the] Indian capitalist class and a reactionary, Fox was upset. He characterised such talk as a caricature of Marxism. No poet or writer could be tied to any imaginary category so easily.[19]

With Fox's help the group of about six or seven individuals set to organizing an association. A committee was formed, and, as could be expected in instances where a committee is involved, the beginning was very slow. "But soon all of us took greater interest," Zaheer remarks. He continues:

> It was decided that a manifesto be drafted to formulate the aims and objects [of the group]. Four or five persons were commissioned to do this job. [Mulk Raj] Anand prepared the first draft, which was very long. Later this work was entrusted to Dr. [Jyotirmaya] Ghosh, who presented his draft before the committee. I was asked to rewrite the drafts of Anand and Ghosh (which we had discussed repeatedly for hours together) and prepare a final draft. After many disputes and long discussion about every sentence and every word, the committee finally approved the draft.[20]

Here Zaheer introduces the second most important individual in the development of the AIPWA, Dr. Mulk Raj Anand, who is best known as an English novelist and, at present, editor of the prestigious Indian arts journal, *Marg* (Path), published in Bombay. He was born in Peshawar in 1905, the son of a silversmith turned sepoy. Thus, his background offers a stark contrast to that of Zaheer. He was educated at Lahore and received a Ph.D. from the University of London, with a specialty in Indian art.[21] His first novel, *Coolie*, was written in 1933.[22] In 1935 his second novel, *Untouchable*, was published with an introduction by E. M. Forster, whom Anand knew through his associations with the Bloomsbury Group.[23]

Zaheer, together with Anand and other members of the group, "Very ceremoniously . . . held the first regular meeting" of the association in the back room of the Nanking Restaurant, lent for the occasion by the proprietor.[24] The room was small and unventilated and bulged with the total of between thirty and thirty-five persons who attended, nearly all of them students from London, Oxford and Cambridge. Mulk Raj Anand was elected president of the group, and the manifesto which the committee had prepared was presented to the group for further revision. A final form of the manifesto was eventually published in the *Left Review* of February 1935. In addition, mimeographed copies of this manifesto, again altered, were sent to India for circulation among various writers, among them Premchand, who printed a Hindi translation of it eight months later in his journal, *Hans* (Swan) in October 1935. Because this manifesto is the most basic document in the development of Socialist Realism in India, and because it attempts to set forth some basic definitions of terms, the manifesto is quoted here *in toto* in both its London and *Hans* forms. There are significant differences between these two versions which, upon close analysis, demonstrate certain problems which the group would have to face when it took the Movement to India the following year. Hence, we shall quote both versions side by side. In order to mark the contrasts between the two versions more clearly, the texts are broken down in parallel fashion so that a given statement in one is juxtaposed with approximately the same statement in the other. When a statement occurs in only one of the texts,

the opposite column has been left blank. The marginal numbers, 1 through 19, do not occur in the original texts, but are added here as reference points to facilitate the subsequent discussion. The translation from the Hindi is deliberately as literal as possible.

	London Version	*Hans* Version
1.	Radical changes are taking place in Indian society.	Great changes are taking place in Indian society
2.	Fixed ideas and old beliefs, social and political institutions are being challenged. Out of the present turmoil and conflict a new society is arising.	and the foundations of old ideas and beliefs are being shaken and a new society is being born.
3.	The spiritual reaction, however, though moribund and doomed to ultimate decay, is still operative and is making desperate efforts to prolong itself.	
4.	It is the duty of Indian writers to give expression to the changes taking place in Indian life and assist the spirit of progress in the country.	It is the duty of Indian writers that they should give the dress of words and form to the existent changes in Indian life and should assist in putting the country on the path of construction and progress.
5.	Indian literature, since the breakdown of classical literature, has had the fatal tendency to escape from the actualities of life. It has tried to find a refuge from reality in spiritualism and idealism.	After the destruction of the ancient civilization, Indian literature, having run away from the realities of life, had hidden in the protection of asceticism and devotionalism.
6.	The result has been that it has produced a rigid formalism and a banal and perverse ideology.	The result is that it has become lifeless and ineffective.

London Version	*Haris* Version
7. Witness the mystical devotional obsession of our literature, its furtive and sentimental attitude towards sex, its emotional exhibitionism and its almost total lack of rationality.	Today in our literature, in both form as well as in content, there has come an excess of devotionalism and asceticism. There is a general exhibition of emotion; reason and thought have been totally ignored -- nay! -- rejected!
8. Such literature was produced particularly during the past two centuries, one of the most unhappy periods of our history, a period of disintegrating feudalism and of acute misery and degradation of the Indian people as a whole.	In the preceding two centuries, which have been the declining period of our history, most literature which has been produced has been of this very sort.
9. It is the object of our association to rescue literature and other arts from the priestly, academic and decadent classes in whose hands they have degenerated so long; to bring the arts into the closest touch with the people; and to make them the vital organ which will register the actualities of life, as well as lead us to the future.	The object of this association is to take our literature and other art forms from the monopolistic control of priests, pundits and other conservatives. It [the association] should bring them [literature and other art forms] nearer the people. They should be made to reflect life and reality so that we may be able to light our future.
10. While claiming to be the inheritors of the best traditions of Indian civilization, we shall criticize ruthlessly, in all its political, economic and cultural aspects, the spirit of reaction in our country; and we shall foster through interpretative and creative works (both native and foreign resources) everything that will lead our country to the new life for which it is striving.	Preserving the best traditions of India, we will comment pitilessly on the decadent aspects of our country and will depict in a critical and creative manner all those things with which we may arrive at our destination.

London Version	*Hans* Version
11. We believe that the new literature of India must deal with the basic problems of our existence to-day -- the problems of hunger and poverty, social backwardness and political subjugation, so that it may help us to understand these problems and through such understanding help us act.	It is our belief that the new literature of India must respect the basic realities of our present-day life, and these are the questions of our bread, plight, our social degradation and political slavery. Only then will we be able to understand these problems and the revolutionary spirit will be born in us.
12.	All those things which take us toward confusion, dissension, and blind imitation is conservative; also, all that which engenders in us a critical capacity, which induces us to test our dear traditions on the touchstone of our reason and perception, which makes us healthy and produces among us the strength of unity and integration, that is what we call Progressive.
13. With the above aims in view, the following resolutions have been adopted:	Keeping these objectives in mind, the association has passed the following resolutions:
14. (1) The establishment of organizations of writers to correspond to the various linguistic zones of India; the coordination of these organizations by holding conferences, publishing of magazines, pamphlets, etc.	(1) To establish organizations of writers in the various linguistic provinces of India; to establish contact and cooperation among these organizations by means of meetings, pamphlets, etc.; to produce a close relationship among the organizations of the provinces, the center and London.
15. (2) To co-operate with those literary organizations whose aims do not conflict with the basic aims of the Association.	(2) To establish an association with those literary organizations which are not opposed to the aims of this organization.

London Version	*Hans* Version
16. (3) To produce and to translate literature of a progressive nature and of high technical standard; to fight cultural reaction; and in this way, to further the cause of Indian freedom and social regeneration.	(3) To create and translate Progressive literature which should be healthy and powerful, with which we may be able to erase cultural backwardness and advance to the path towards Indian freedom and social progress.
17. (4) To strive for the acceptance of a common language (Hindustani) and a common script (Indo-Roman) for India.	(4) To propagate the acceptance of Hindustani as the national language and Indo-Roman as the national script.
18. (5) To protect the interests of authors; to help authors who require and deserve assistance for the publication of their works.	(5) To struggle for freedom of thought, opinion and expression of ideas.
19. (6) To fight for the right of free expression of thought and opinion.[25]	(6) To protect the interests of authors; to assist people's authors who may want help in order to publish their books.[26]

Several points are very apparent in both versions of this manifesto. First, the writers who drafted it handle very well the jargon of leftist-liberal writers of the period. Such phrases as "a new society is arising," "spirit of progress," "bring the arts into the closest touch with the people," "spirit of reaction," etc., are all part and parcel of the vocabulary of leftist-liberal criticism of the period. Certainly the aims of the Association as set forth in the manifesto are broad enough to subsume a large spectrum of political thinking and literary attitudes.

Another striking feature of the manifesto is the fact that, right from the outset, these writers were very involved with and committed to using their literary endeavors as a means to secure freedom for India from England. Hence, their thinking is necessarily tainted with aspirations for freedom of their country; the cause of Communism -- such as it is stated in the manifesto -- and their nationalistic hopes are not distinguished here. If anything, Communism seems to be one of the best alternatives to British imperialism and domination. This point is particularly important to note, not because it is unique among writers in India, for certainly writers in other colonial areas have expressed and continue to express such sentiments. Rather, this attitude changes

substantially after India gains independence in 1947. In fact, the thrust of the AIPWA after 1947 offers a stark contrast to this first manifesto of 1935, a point which will be made very clear in the discussions in subsequent papers.

When one considers the very small amount of effort on the part of Indian writers to organize themselves prior to 1936, one must appreciate the practical set of resolves offered to the writer in order for him to ply his craft: the publication and translation programs, help in preserving freedom of expression and opinion, and even a hint of financial subsidy in resolution 5. Prior to this time, there had been no concerted efforts on a countrywide level to look after some of these practical aspects of writing. Very little literature was translated from one language to another; little was done to keep writers from one part of the country apprized of what was being written in the literature of another part of the nation. Prior to the Progressive Writers' Association, the only other literary organization set up on a national scale was the Indian chapter of the International P.E.N., organized in London in 1933 by Madame Sophia Wadia, together with British playwright and critic Hermon Ould.[27] In 1934 a group of Indian writers, among them K. M. Munshi and Kaka Sahab Kalelkar, together with direct assistance from Mahatma Gandhi, undertook the task of organizing the Bharatiya Sahitya Parishad, an all-India literary forum.[28] After several false starts and initial problems, this organization held its first meeting several weeks after the first meeting of the AIPWA in April 1936. It met with a reasonable amount of success and could be looked upon as the forerunner to the Sahitya Akademi, India's present-day national academy of letters.

A comparison of the two versions of the manifesto also offers some interesting insights into the thinking of the organizers of the AIPWA. It must be stated from the outset, however, that because one is working with translations, one can judge only in approximations, for translating is a matter of approximations. The most fruitful comparisons of these two versions, then, would come from noting significant departures in wording, additions and deletions from the text.

The first line of the manifesto offers a change which is symptomatic of a slackening of tone and temperance of purpose between the two versions, the London manifesto being the more direct and uncompromising. The term "radical changes" of the London version is translated into Hindi as *"barī barī tabdīliyān,"* which suggests large and numerous changes but does not convey the sense of "radical," nor does it approximate this meaning.[29] Similarly, statement 3 of the London manifesto, which speaks of "spiritual reaction," is not included in the *Hans* version, nor is the statement regarding Indian literature's "furtive and sentimental attitude towards sex" in statement 7 of the London version included in the *Hans* version. Similarly, the term "obsession," as used in statement 7 of the London version, is certainly not conveyed in the *Hans* translation *"bhar mār,"* or "excess." Again, the "rigid formalism" and "banal and perverse ideology" of statement 6 of the London version are watered down to the ambiguous terms of "lifeless" (*be-rūh*) and "ineffective" (*be-asar*).

Again, in statement 10 of the London manifesto the authors speak of using "both native and foreign resources" in achieving the new life for which India is striving. The *Haṅs* version makes no mention of these "foreign resources" and subsumes all of the London statement under the vague and pallid rubric of "all those things with which we may arrive at our destination." This particular deletion suggests an attempt to avoid allusion to things foreign and to set things Indian in the foreground.

Statement 12, which does not appear in the London version, seems to be an attempt on the part of the authors to widen the term "Progressive" to be as all-inclusive as possible, and suggests to this author a reason for the general restraint of the wording at various other points in the *Haṅs* version. It appears that the authors of the London manifesto, being away from India in the relatively liberated atmosphere of Bloomsbury and English universities, could afford the luxury of rather pointed and powerful statements in their document. However, in order to gather more support in India, particularly among Hindi writers, these organizers had to temper their language. This period is a particularly sensitive time for relationships between Hindi and Urdu writers, for, when another radically different version of this manifesto was presented to the first meeting of the AIPWA in Lucknow in 1936, the question arises as to which language, Hindi or Urdu, shall be the national language of free India. This question was hotly debated by politicians and writers and took on unattractive communal and political aspects. In fact, a bit of the Hindi chauvinism which was so prevalent in this period can be seen even today in the treatment of the *Haṅs* manifesto by Premchand's English biographer, Madan Gopal. In addition to stating incorrectly that Premchand printed a "summary" of the manifesto (see n. 25), Madan Gopal also gives a rundown of the six resolutions in this document, placing the fourth point -- the one concerning Hindustani and Indo-Roman script in the London version -- in the sixth, or last, position and, in addition, reduces the resolution, which in Azmi's *Haṅs* version is "(4) To propagate the acceptance of Hindustani as the national language and Indo-Roman as the national script" to "(6) to work for the acceptance of Indo-Roman script for use by all Indian languages."[30] No mention is made of Hindustani as the national or common language of the country. The point to be made here is the fact that Hindi writers were deeply sensitive about the relative immaturity and lack of prestige of their language and literature vis-à-vis Urdu. In fact, later in 1936 when Sajjad Zaheer was trying to muster support for the AIPWA among Hindi writers and was not succeeding very well, Premchand wrote him that "Hindi writers are pressed with feelings of inferiority."[31] In addition, many of the Hindi writers of this period were orthodox Hindus and were not about to relinquish their privileged position in Hindi literature.[32] If presented with the London manifesto, they most probably would have rejected the AIPWA outright. Sajjad Zaheer, or Premchand, or whomever altered the London manifesto for publication in India realized this point; hence, the relatively moderate tone the *Haṅs* version assumes. Such alterations were made in order to make the Association more palatable to this more conservative group. As it happened, the Lucknow manifesto of 1936 goes even further to accommodate dissident groups, for nothing at all in it is said of either a national language nor a national script. In addition,

Sajjad Zaheer, in speaking of a national script in his "Reminiscences," offers a number of interesting observations. The suggestion for incorporating a resolution on Indo-Roman script might be traced to Dr. Suniti Kumar Chatterji, who presented before this group a lecture in support of this innovation for all Indian languages.[33] Zaheer remarks:

> We believed in Roman script ourselves, and his [Chatterji's] lecture convinced us so thoroughly that we became strong supporters of this reform. The idea of one script for the entire country was very attractive and in London the fire of prejudice and sentiment which blazes at the mention of this problem in India was completely absent. Hindi- and Urdu-speaking people, Madrasis, Bengalis, Gujaratis, in short, young men from every part of India, were present there and all of them unamimously decided that the Progressive Writers' Association should propagate for Roman script.[34]

Two particular points should be noted here. First, the sense of solidarity among these young writers, especially among the Hindi-speaking and the Urdu-speaking, who seem able to put aside their individual linguistic, provincial and communal dispositions for the greater good -- in the London setting, of course. Second, the fact that Zaheer says nothing about Hindustani as the national language of India; he speaks only of Indo-Roman script. If one recalls that he wrote these memoirs in 1940, it is apparent that he wishes to avoid discussion of this particular controversy; after all, he was on the losing side.

A final point of interest is in resolutions 5 and 6 of the London version. These items are reversed in the *Haṅs* manifesto. More important, however, is the fact that the *Haṅs* version qualifies the word "author" with the adjective *awāmī*, or "people's," thus giving "people's authors." This is perhaps the only instance in the entire manifesto where the *Haṅs* version is more specific and perhaps more radical in its wording than the London manifesto.

Meanwhile, the Indian Progressive Writers' Association in London would meet once or twice a month. "Our custom was to discuss and criticise every article or story read before the meeting," Zaheer comments.[35] In addition to the discussion of Indo-Roman script by Suniti Kumar Chatterji already alluded to, other talks included a critique of the Bengali revolutionary poet, Qazi Nazrul Islam, and the significance of his poetry.[36] As stated earlier, Zaheer read his play, *Bīmār*, to the association (see pp. 1-2). Shortly afterward, he began writing his novel, *Landan kī ek rāt* (A Night in London), which he eventually finished in Paris and which is his major literary production.[38]

Political events during this period made their immediate impact on literary works. Zaheer himself cites three major events to which he and his group reacted strongly: the trial of the Communist organizer Georgi Dimitrov, who was accused of burning the Reichstag, and the subsequent protest against the charges by many of Europe's leading intellectuals; the formation of the United Front in France and the workers' strikes; and the unsuccessful workers' rebellion which took place in Austria.[39] All of these events bespoke, in one way or another, the growth of Fascism in Europe. It was finally the French writers who acted. The *Left Review* carried an announcement of an International Congress of Writers to be opened in Paris on 21 June 1935, "which has been called by a committee of French writers who believed that the perils confronting cultural freedom in a number of countries to-day are such that measures should be taken for its defence."[40]

Similar announcements from the organizational committee for this Congress were sent to many writers and journals throughout the world. In India an appeal from this committee was printed in the journal *Savera* (Dawn) of Karachi:

> Fellow writers! Support life against death. Our pens, our art, our knowledge should not relent against those forces which invite death, which choke mankind, which rule with the power of money, which establish the dictatorship of industrialists and tyrants and finally appear in the various guises of Fascism. And these are the very forces which suck the blood of innocent human beings.[41]

The organizational committee for this Congress was comprised of some of the most distinguished names in French letters, some of whom had direct connection with India and/or Indians. André Gide, for example, was one; his avowal of Communism in 1933 was just as sensational in literary circles as was his disavowal of it in 1936. He had also been the French translator of Nobel Prize-winner Rabindranath Tagore's *Gitanjali (L'Offrande lyrique)* (Paris: Nouvelle Revue Française, 1913). Another convener was Henri Barbusse, whose powerful anti-war novel, *Le feu: Journal d'une escouade* (Paris: Flammarion, 1916), won the Prix Goncourt in 1917.[42] In 1925 Barbusse assisted Evelyn Roy, wife of the then deported M. N. Roy, to form the Comité pro-Hindu to agitate for a reversal of the expulsion order which forced Roy to seek refuge in Luxembourg. The Comité, however, was ineffective.[43] The third major organizer was Romain Rolland, whose long and varied contacts with India dated to 1919 when he read Rabindranath Tagore's lectures on nationalism delivered in Japan in 1916 (published by Macmillan as *The Message of India to Japan*). He wrote Tagore asking him to sign the Declaration of Independence of the Spirit in June 1919, which Rolland had drafted on behalf of European writers and intellectuals.[44] The two men met in Paris in March 1921.[45] Later, in 1924, Rolland wrote his book *Mahatma Gandhi* (Paris: Delamain Boutelleau & Co.). Another organizer, André Malraux, did not then have a direct connection with India; however, his novel *La Condition humaine* (Paris: Gallimard, 1933) did concern itself with the Chinese civil war. The meeting organized by these writers was called the International Congress for the Defence of Culture and met in Paris from 21-26 June 1935, in the Palais de la Mutabilité.[46]

Some two hundred writers attended; the number of countries represented varies according to whom one reads. In his generally temperate but appreciative review of the meeting, novelist E. M. Forster, a member of the British delegation, claims that fifteen countries were represented.[47] In her enthusiastic and committed report, novelist Christina Stead, a member of the Australian delegation, claims that thirty-eight countries attended.[48] In any event, the list of participants was indeed impressive. In addition to the conveners -- except for Rolland, who did not attend[49] -- the French delegation included Jean-Richard Bloch, Louis Aragon, Julien Benda and Jean Cassou. In addition to Forster, the British contingent consisted of Aldous Huxley, John Strachey, Ralph Fox and Herbert Read. From Germany, mostly writers in exile attended, including Heinrich Mann, Anna Seghers and Ernst Toller; Thomas Mann was supposed to attend but did not. The Soviet delegation had fifteen members, led by Elya Ehrenberg, who was accompanied by such writers as Boris Pasternak, Alexy Tolstoy and Isaac Babel, who was something of a show-stopper when he spoke before the Congress.[50] Maxim Gorky was also expected but he became ill en route and was forced to return to Russia. He did send a message to the Congress, in which he commended the participants, "those men and women who feel the approach of fascism as a real personal injury" and who were directing their efforts against "the present national combination of bankers, munitions-makers, and other parasites [who] are preparing themselves for the new battle for power, for the liberty of ravaging colonial territories and for the freedom to exploit the working class."[51]

Among the American contingent were Waldo Frank and Michael Gold, who got his picture in the newspapers and literary journals a good deal.[52]

The following vivid picture -- patched with too much purple for reportage, perhaps -- is offered by Christina Stead:

> It is a world of energetic poses. Malraux, youthful, fatigued, indefatigable, bowed, gets admirers with the whites of his eyes; Barbusse calls up romance with his coiffe of Cochin-China cock; Waldo Frank takes the shine out of them all with his plump, new-world shine; E. E. Kisch with his stick, thick-set, sunburnt, pungent, limps about smouldering with silenced oratory; Feuchtwanger, little, tanned, bowed, mild, with thick shoulders and a head like a grapeseed; Huxley, one would say an emanation in a test-tube, elongating indefinitely like the filaments of Bacillus Vulgaris; Gide Brahma (Brahma is usually represented as red) with his consort Eloquence, naked ivory, an affable mask in glory, in ex-Huguenot rectitude; spenetic Anna Seghers, with the face of a Russian heroine, restless, lonely, dejected in exile; Aragon, knight-errant, face and figure of perennial adolescent, the ardent converted converting, filling the hall with the splendid emphasis of his harangues.[53]

Witnessing this scene were some 3,000 to 4,000 individuals in the audience, "for the most part youthful and [who] had paid to come in."[54] Among these youthful onlookers were Sajjad Zaheer and Mulk Raj Anand of the Indian Progressive Writers' Association. Zaheer makes the following observation, one also echoed by several other commentators on this Congress:

> At the conference were writers of different beliefs and persuasions. On one issue, however, all were united. All believed that writers should with every means in their power defend their right of freedom of thought and opinion. Wherever fascist or imperialistic forces attempt dictatorially to impose restrictions on writers or adopt repulsive measures on account of their views, a powerful agitation should be launched against it.[55]

One point which Zaheer emphasizes, but which many other commentators missed, was "the presence of workers in large numbers as if they were there to prove the newly established relationship between the writers and the people, to strengthen which was the special purpose of this conference."[56]

Gide's opening address was entitled "In Defence of Culture."[57] In it, the author was essentially offering a paean to the individual human being, to the individual writer, but with a particularly Marxist twist. According to Gide, it is in the individual that what is universally and essentially human resides. As a corollary, he says that "individuals and their peculiarities can best flourish in a communist society; or that (as Malraux writes, in a recent preface which has already become famous [i.e., to *La Condition humaine*]) 'Communism restores fertility in the individual.'"[58] In speaking of the relationship between art and society, Gide comments that "Art lapses into artificiality when it gets out of touch with the realities of life." "With the exception of Latin literature which (in this respect) outdoes that of France in its classical phase, I know of no section of European literature more anaemic, more remote from hard facts, than the French, which is continually lapsing into dreamland."[59]

Repudiation of the past, however, is futile and absurd, according to Gide; yet "however hateful the capitalist system may seem, we cannot deny that it has been a necessary stage on the way to the communism we desire."[60] The function of literature is to communicate; its sole function is not to "mirror," as is believed in the USSR. That literature which communicates best is the most worthwhile; it is a literature which "informs, propounds, creates."[61] Such literature "must . . . inevitably be a literature of opposition" to the shams and conventions of culture.[62]

In looking at the great literature of the past solely for "the lessons we should draw from their words" is, according to Gide, a mistake. He further asserts: "For first of all, a work teaches by the sole fact of its beauty, and I see some disdain, some ignorance of beauty in the too careful search for a lesson to learn, in the single-minded examination of

motifs, the shunning of the *quiétifs* (appeasements)."[63] Gide concludes:

> To-day all our sympathy, all our longing to communicate goes out towards a mankind that is oppressed, humbugged, and suffering. But I cannot accept the view that man will cease to be interesting when he is no longer hungry, tormented, and oppressed.
>
> I cannot agree that he deserves our sympathy only in so far as he is wretched. It is true that suffering often enhances our spiritual stature. If it does not lay us low, it anneals us and bronzes us. All the same, I like to think of, to long for, a social condition in which joy will be accessible to all; and to expect the coming of men whom joy, rather than suffering will ennoble.[64]

Later in the evening of 21 July, English novelist E. M. Forster gave his speech, entitled "Liberty in England." According to him, freedom in England is "limited": "It means freedom for the Englishman, but not for the subject-races of his Empire. If you invited the average Englishman to share his liberties with the inhabitants of India, Kenya, he will reply 'Never,' if he is a Tory, and 'Not until I consider them worthy' if he is a Liberal."[65] The threat of Fascism in Britain, claims Forster,

> is negligible. We're menanced by something much more insidious -- by what I called "Fabio-Fascism," by the dictator-spirit working quietly away behind the facade of constitutional forms, passing a little law (like the Sedition Act) here, endorsing a departmental tyranny there, emphasizing the national need for secrecy elsewhere, and whispering and cooing the so-called "news" every evening over the wireless, until opposition is tamed and gulled. Fabio-Fascism is what I am afraid of, for it is the traditional method by which liberty has been attacked in England. It was the method of King Charles I -- a gentleman if ever there was one -- the method of our enlightened authoritarian gentlemen of today.[66]

As an example of such insidious sedition, Forster discussed the recent proscription of James Hanley's novel *Boy* (London: Boriswood Ltd., 1931) under the newly passed Sedition Act. Why should policemen in a provincial town such as Lancashire, Forster asks, be given the prerogative to ban a book that had been published five years earlier?[67] Forster states that he wants

> greater freedom for writers, both as creators and critics. In England, more than elsewhere, their creative work is hampered because they can't write freely about sex, and I want it recognized that sex is a subject for serious treatment and also for comic treatment; this latter aspect of it

> is usually ignored by speakers when they get on to platforms, so I don't wish to miss it out. As for criticism, I want to maintain the right of public comment -- in England here we are fortunate, because we possess it still, whereas from some of you it has been withdrawn. But public comment is negative, if nobody hears it, and so I want publicity for all sorts of comments -- and that in England as elsewhere is being lost, chiefly owing to the governmental control of broadcasting. And I want the maintenance of culture.
>
> How would I bring this about? By an attempt in my own country to utilize the existing apparatus, and to extend to all classes and races what has hitherto been confined to a few wealthy and white-coloured people.[68]

Nearly all the other delegates gave speeches as well.[69] None of the other commentators except Zaheer and Oakley Johnson noted the presence of the Indian delegation. Johnson states that such a delegation was in fact present, and that the speaker "denounced British rule as a gross obstacle to cultural advance in India."[70] This delegate was Madame Sophia Wadia, whom we mentioned earlier in connection with the founding of the Indian P.E.N. (see n. 22).

Addressing the Congress in French, Madame Wadia spoke to the "problem of colonization," which, to her thinking "is by no means local or national in a narrow sense, as it appeals to the very conscience in man, to his innate sense of justice and to the generosity of his heart; and hence no one who believes in the unity of the whole human family and the reality of universal brotherhood can refuse to interest himself in it."[71] Madame Wadia then recalled the many glories of India's past, a past which the British as rulers in that country have preferred to overlook, in fact to ignore:

> The *avowed* aim of all colonization is to carry afar the benefits of an allegedly superior civilization. Inevitably the conquerors arrogate to themselves the right of imposing their civilization upon the vanquished. They forget the first principle of true culture, which consists in bringing out the best which is in the soil and not in forcibly planting in that soil that which is foreign to it and can never grow well in it. What is true for the education of the child holds true for that of the nation, which is after all but a collectivity of individuals, of grown-up children. Already modern education is feeling the effects of the most artificial régime which forces all individuals to follow the same line of development instead of helping each of them to find his own way.[72]

In other words, British domination in India, particularly in the area of education, is causing an undesirable homogeneity in the complex and variegated cultural life of India. Madame Wadia continues: "The wealth of a culture

consists of the varied contributions of genius and talents which, viewed from different angles, differ one from the other, and humanity can progress only by the collaboration of all nations, each having its own distinct donation to make to the common good."[73] Hence Britain, by its domination of India, is not collaborating for the common good of humanity. In fact, Britain is impeding the cultural growth of India to the extent that such domination is having a deleterious effect on the country.

> To impose abruptly the civilization of the fighting, trading and exploiting West upon the meditative, philosophical and disinterested Indian people could not but produce a frightful clash which was bound to shake the sensitiveness of the entire Indian culture. The Indians, subjected in spite of themselves to the regime of a purely Western education, got out of their depth for a moment and then like true philosophers they made a sincere effort to adapt themselves to this strange culture. It was a long and painful struggle in which some lost their balance for the lack of spiritual sustenance which they required, in which others became artificial products, bad copies of Westerners, in which still others withdrew into themselves, abandoning all creative activity.[74]

Indian literature, however, is one area in which this cultural aggression has not been entirely successful or long-lived:

> The Indian literature of this epoch furnishes a faithful mirror in which we find the record of all these conflicts. For a long time the Indians let themselves be hypnotized by the so-called prestige of the white race and suffered from a genuine sense of inferiority. Nothing so improverishes and debilitates the literature of a country as the feeling of humiliation of the man whom others are pleased to treat as inferior and subordinate.[75]

However, this situation, while it did exist in India for a time, has begun to change.

> The facts themselves have forced us in India to recognize that Western civilization is not suited to us and that in trying to destroy our spiritual traditions in order to become a poor imitation of the West we were not only harming ourselves but, what is even more serious, we were impoverishing the whole world to which we ought to make our contribution.[76]

Madame Wadia then touches on the "much exaggerated" disunion between Hindus and Muslims, which she considers minimal, then opines: "From the point of view of true culture there is no distinction between Hindu and Muslim authors;

they are, above all, the sons of the spiritual India who aspired to serve all humanity."[77] Although there are fanatics in both the Muslim and Hindu literatures of India who advocate the a priori abandonment of everything Western, Madame Wadia offers a compromise, one which is in fact the entire basis for her speech: she demands for India the freedom of choice in determining the course which Indian culture will take:

> . . . we reserve the right of choice and we do not want to be submerged, for we have understood that we must remain ourselves so as to be able to make our maximum contribution. This is why the indigenous literatures are now in full bloom. And what is more, is India does not want to talk only to herself, the undertaking is bound to be in full swing in India of translating into English the most important vernacular writings in order thus to be able to speak to others.[78]

India, Madame Wadia concludes, seeks to cooperate with the West, but refuses to be dominated by it. "Our ideal then is not competition but collaboration; it is not the exploitation of one class by another but the mutual cooperation of all classes; it is not fratricidal strife but international peace."[79]

There are, obviously, several problematic points in this speech, points which have provoked unflattering remarks from Sajjad Zaheer. It is unfortunate that Madame Wadia, with all the enthusiasm of a foreign bride with Theosophical propensities, to call upon the stereotypic notion of the "spiritual" and "mystical East", an idea which would meet with immediate consternation by anyone with the slightest Marxist leanings. In addition, Madame Wadia identifies herself, consciously or unconsciously, as an Indian, which she was by marriage rather than by heritage. Hence, she has misrepresented herself. It is interesting to note that this piece of misinformation is carried over in Sajjad Zaheer's comments on Madame Wadia, whom he identifies as a Parsi, and on her speech. "It is regrettable that while Chinese, Japanese, Persians, Turks, Arabs, Tatars, and so on were adequately represented at the conference Indian writers should have been represented by Miss Sophia Wadia, a Parsee lady from Bombay. It would have been better to leave India unrepresented than send her to represent the country."[80]

Even though the London branch of the Progressive Writers' Association had been organized some time earlier, Zaheer and his associates were apprehensive about representing India at such a meeting. "As for ourselves, few of us could labor under the misapprehension that we could represent the grand literature of India at this conference. Further, we were not authorised by any Indian literary organisation to represent Indian writers there."[81] This last smacks a bit of rationalization. Certainly either Anand or Zaheer or both could have been appointed delegates to this Congress, particularly with their connection with Ralph Fox and E. M. Forster. The fact is that these young men probably felt inferior to the task; Zaheer states in a litter to this author, dated 10 July 1971, that he was "mere student at the time" and served "only as an

On-looker in this Conference." What is significant in Zaheer's reluctance to participate actively in the Congress is the fact that he and the members of his group were, at the time, unsure of themselves; they seemed unaware of their collective and individual potential. Prior to the Paris meeting, their commitment was, in the main, intellectual, not one of action. It existed in their minds and on paper. They realized that because most of them were students or recent Ph.D.'s they had very little status, particularly in India. It was incumbent upon them to put their commitment into a program of action, the catalyst for such a shift to come from this meeting and from encouragement by older, established writers.

Such encouragement was forthcoming from individuals such as Premchand and Louis Aragon. Through their help, the intellectual commitment of these young writers was transformed into activism beyond the bounds of the Association, with several visible results. Mulk Raj Anand, for example, presented an address to the Conference of the International Association of Writers for the Defence of Culture, which held its second meeting in London, 19-23 June 1936. This meeting was organized by the International Bureau of the International Association of Writers for the Defence of Culture, which was set up after the Paris meeting. This formal organization was to "maintain and develop those contacts that the [first] Congress made possible."[82] The bureau was also to stimulate translations between countries and to seek publication of works of distinction which were "interdicted" in the country of the author. Another function of the organization, which was quite effective, particularly in Paris, right up to the outbreak of World War II, was to assist writers in travelling to various countries, to make lists periodically of distinguished works in all countries, to set up a foundation for the award of a world prize in letters, and, finally, "to fight on its own ground, which is culture, against war, fascism, and generally speaking, against everything that menaces civilization."[83]

The London meeting at which Mulk Raj Anand spoke was not an open meeting as was the 1935 Paris gathering; it was by invitation only. As a result, this meeting had fewer luminaries than the Paris meeting of 1934, nor did it receive as much coverage in the press and in literary magazines.[84]

But it was only through having attended the first meeting that Anand's participation the following year could have taken place. All young writers who attended the Paris meeting were affected. In terms of the Indian onlookers, Anand and Zaheer, much of what was said by the various speakers was internalized by them; in other instances, the speakers at the Congress gave concrete expression to many of the sentiments which these young writers felt but were unable to verbalize. Consider, for example, Gide's demand that literature be brought closer to the masses. Writing in 1940, Zaheer says: "In the present-day capitalist society writers as a group have been separated from the people, a little afraid of them, entertaining contempt for them in their hearts. In any case, they are unfamiliar with the people. The reason for the spiritual paralysis of a large part of modern literature lies in the distance that separates them from the source of life, the life of the labouring classes."[85]

Certainly one would not venture to say that Zaheer has plagiarized from Gide, nor that Gide has said something original here. The fact is that such sentiments as expressed by both writers were pretty much the standard line taken by all leftist critics of this period. Consider also the problems brought up in Forster's speech, particularly those of censorship, sex in literature, and pornography. These were later to become burning issues for the Progressive Writer's Association in India.

Ideas aside, the real impact of the Paris meeting is succinctly stated by Cristina Stead: "It is an advantage to a young writer to brush elbows with those known to fame, to make his private speeches and gestures the corollary to his writing."[86] In this sense, then, Zaheer and Anand profited greatly from this meeting.

In addition, Zaheer could now count Louis Aragon as his mentor. Zaheer's first personal contact with Aragon came at a literary gathering which the latter attended; the subject of the meeting was a paper on Gide's most recent writings and the general trend in that author's literary corpus presented by critic Albert Saroux. Zaheer summarizes Saroux's comments stating that "it was natural for Gide to lean towards socialism, for the man who had devoted all his literary efforts to show the path of emancipation to man through ego and sin, if he is honest, would certainly protest against the suppression of individualism in a modern capitalist society, and hence would necessarily embrace the philosophy of socialism."[87]

To these comments by Saroux, Aragon added his own. "He [Aragon] emphasized, however, that Gide's support for socialism was mainly emotion," Zaheer states. "He [Gide] was still away from Marxist socialism, the only socialism with a scientific basis. Aragon said it was natural for an artist to approach socialism in this way, but if he did not secure a sound intellectual foundation for his socialist thought he could fall into the mire of conservatism at a crucial time."[88]

Aragon's observation later proved to be substantive; for Gide, after rushing to the bedside of the dying Maxim Gorky, toured Russia and, on his return to France, disavowed Communism.[89] As Zaheer put it, "What a pity that Aragon proved to be correct and within a year André Gide left the ranks of the progressive writers, imprisoning himself in the dark abyss of individualism."[90]

In addition to finding Aragon an excellent poet and an effective public speaker, Zaheer was also impressed with his "excellent organizational ability."[91] By this time -- the summer of 1935 -- Zaheer had finished his law course and was intent on returning to India.

> We knew from the very beginning that living in London we could neither influence Indian literature nor create any good literature ourselves. Side by side with our realising the advantages of forming the association in

> London, this feeling was strengthened. A few exiled Indians could do little more than draw up plans among themselves and produce an orphanlike literature under the influence of European culture. The most important thing that we learnt in Europe was that a progressive writers movement could bear fruits only when it is propagated in various languages and when the writers of India realise the necessity of this movement and put in practice its aims and objects. The best that the London Association could do was to put us in contact with the progressive literary movements abroad, to represent Indian literature in the West and to interpret for India the thoughts of Western writers and the social problems which were profoundly influencing Western literature.[92]

The idea of an All-India Progressive Writers' Association was thus firmly in his mind. He gave up his London apartment and moved to Paris for a few months before returning to India. Most of his time was spent in writing *Landan kī ek rāt*, which he completed in Paris. It was in Paris that he finally met Aragon:

> A common friend introduce me to Aragon. Within a few minutes we were talking freely and without reserve. Aragon talked to me for a long time about Indian literature. I told him about the Progressive Writers' Association and said that we proposed to start this movement in India also.[93]

Zaheer, recalling Aragon's organizational talents, asked how he should go about organizing the Indian writers. Aragon's answer was realistic; he pointed out the difficulties he had faced in this context, but was still encouraging. Zaheer reports:

> I asked Aragon about his organization experience in connection with the French and the International Writers' Associations. I still remember his laughter and the peculiar French way in which he shrugged his shoulders and said: "Don't ask that. No other group is more difficult to organize than the writers."[94]

The reason for this difficulty -- a difficulty we have touched on earlier and one which Zaheer would have to face in India eventually -- was because, according to Aragon, "Every writer wants an exclusive path for himself. Even then we must continue our efforts. The conditions of the modern world are forcing the writers to organize themselves for the defence and progress of their art."[95]

With these thoughts firmly in mind, Zaheer left Paris for India; but he did keep in contact with Aragon and the International Writers' Association. Later, when the All-India Progressive Writers' Association was formed on the subcontinent, the group, under the leadership of Sajjad Zaheer, maintained an affiliation with the International Writers' Association as the foreign

branch of that group in India, until its demise with the coming of the war. The AIPWA represented Indian literature in foreign countries according to the instructions of this central organization, as Anand did in London in 1936.

Zaheer describes his departure from Paris in poetic as well as prophetic terms:

> When I left Paris for India autumn had set in. The trees were no longer green, their leaves were already yellowish red. A cold breeze was blowing. It appeared as if someone had extracted the heart out of the sunshine leaving only its light. It was the best season for leaving Europe.
>
> A period of life came to an end, and like every end it was poignant, carrying a pathos of its own. The second and more important period had not yet started. Hopes and yearnings, schemes and plans were agitating my mind.[96]

These "Hope and yearnings, schemes and plans" developed into the first meeting of the All-India Progressive Writers' Association held in Lucknow, 9-10 April 1936, with Premchand presiding as president. This meeting, as we shall see in the papers which follow, served as a fountainhead from which the Socialist Realist Movement in India flowed, a movement which, next to Mahatma Gandhi, produced what is probably the most powerful literary effect upon Indian creative writing during the twentieth century.

FOOTNOTES

1. Gene D. Overstreet and Marshall Windmiller, *Communism in India* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1960), p. 432. Zaheer died 13 September 1973.

2. This book is erroneously dated 1931 in *Who's Who of Indian Writers* (Honolulu: East-West Center Press, 1964), p. 410.

3. Among these the best known collections are *Shole* (Flames) (Allahabad: Naya Samsar [1934]); *Hamārī gali* (Our Lane, 1936), *Qaid xānah* (Prison), and *Maut se pahle* (Before Death, 1945), all published by Insha Press Delhi. For a good article on Ahmed Ali, see David D. Anderson, "Ahmed Ali and *Twilight in Delhi*," *Mahfil, A Quarterly of South Asian Literature*, VII, 1-2 (Spring-Summer 1971), 81-86.

4. Efforts to secure a copy of this volume have been entirely unsuccessful. The editor, Sajjad Zaheer, could not provide a copy, nor could he procure one for me from another source. The book is not available in the libraries of Aligarh Muslim University, Delhi University or the India Office or the British Museum. It is also unavailable in the various collections of the South Asian centers located in the United States.

5. S. Sajjad Zaheer, "Reminiscences," *Indian Literature* (Bombay), II (1952), 51. This essay, translated and edited by Khalique Naqvi and written in 1940 while Zaheer was imprisoned in the Deoli detention camp, appeared first in *Nayā adab* (New Literature), January-February, 1941.

Bīmār, Zaheer's play, appeared in an English translation by the author as "The Living and the Dead," *Indian Writing* (London), I (August 1941), 191-203. Premchand (Dhanpat Rai Srivastava: 1880-1936), the great doyen of Hindi and Urdu fiction, and a close associate of the young Zaheer towards the end of his life, wrote the following to Zaheer in a letter from Benares, 12 June 1936:

> "I read *Bīmār*. The sick man is your hero, but his character has not emerged anywhere, except that he is sick and lying in the home of relatives from whom he is a burden. If he does not accept the ways of society and wants to create a new one in place of the old and considers himself the messenger of a new era, then these ideas must find expression through his action. Mere lip-service to Communism means nothing. I know many such young men who are Socialists and Communists in the company of friends, but who escape to the harem [as women do] when the time for displaying their manly talents arrives. The sick man should be presented in such a way that people have sympathy for him. We can only sympathize with Aziz and feel that Salima [characters in the play] is unfair. The language has clarity and the dialogue between the husband and wife is quite natural." ("Some Unpublished Letters of Premchand," *Nayā adab*, January-February-March, 1940, p. 33.)

This play, like *Angāre*, is of more historical than literary interest.

6. "In Memoriam Rashid Jahan," *Indian Literature* (Bombay), I (1952), 1. The author of this tribute might well be Ali Sardar Jafri, editor of *Indian Literature* and a major poet of the Progressive Movement. "Jahan" and "Jehan" are alternative English spellings of this name.

7. *Ibid.*

8. Aziz Ahmad, *Taraqqī pasand adab* (Progressive Literature) (Delhi: Caman Book Depot, n.d.), p. 44. Ahmad's major works in English include *Studies in Islamic Culture in the Indian Environment* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964); and *Islamic Modernism in India and Pakistan, 1857-1964* (London: Oxford University Press, 1967); his novel, *Aisī bulandī, aisī pastī* (So High, So Low, 1948) has appeared in an English translation by Ralph Russell as *The Shore and the Wave* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1972).

9. *Ibid.*

10. *Ibid.*

11. *Ibid.*

12. *Ibid.* The opening sentence of this quotation reads in Urdu: *"Angāre kā sab se barā naqs ehtiyāt-i-fiqdāṅ aur be-asūlī intahā pasandī thī."* As the sentence stands, it translates thus: "The greatest defect of *Angāre* was the circumspection of absence and unprincipled extremism," which makes no sense. The compound *ehtiyāt-i-fiqdāṅ* ("circumspection of absence") must be read as *fiqdāṅ-i-ehtiyāt* ("absence of circumspection"). A calligrapher's error is doubtless involved here.

13. *Ibid.*

14. Khalilur Rahman Azmi. *Urdū meṅ taraqqī pasand adbī tahrīk* (The Progressive Literary Movement in Urdu) (Aligarh: Anjuman-i-Taraqqi Urdu [India], 1972), p. 30.

15. *Ibid.*

16. Zaheer, "Reminiscences," p. 49.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 47.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 49.

19. *Ibid.*, p. 48. As it turned out, Fox never visited India, for he was killed in a battle for the small village Lopera at the siege of Madrid during the Spanish Civil War on 28-29 December 1967. At the time of his death he was thirty-six and was commissar of the British Company of the XIVth International Brigade. See Hugh Thomas, *The Spanish Civil War* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1961), p. 350.

20. Zaheer, "Reminiscences," p. 50. Jyotirmaya C. Ghosh, born in Ghasiara, Bengal, in 1896, was educated at both Calcutta and Edinburgh Universities, receiving his Ph.D. from Edinburgh. He is retired Principal of Presidency College, Calcutta, and has written fifteen books, mostly short stories and essays, in both Bengali and English.

21. K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar erroneously implies that Anand received his Ph.D. from Cambridge. See K. R. Srinavas Iyengar, *Indian Writing in English* (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1962), p. 258. He devotes an entire chapter to Anand's work. An interesting portrait of Anand is in Jack Lindsay, *Mulk Raj Anand: A Critical Study* (Bombay: Hind Kitabs, 1948). An expanded, undated version of this essay appears as "Mulk Raj Anand: A Study," *Contemporary Indian Literature*, V (December 1965), 21-33. Hereafter cited as *CIL*. This whole issue commemorates Mulk Raj Anand. Sajjad Zaheer has also written a short essay, "Mulk Raj Anand," *CIL*, V (December 1965), 11-12. A recent book-length study of Anand is Margaret Berry, *Mulk Raj Anand: The Man and the Novelist* (Amsterdam: Oriental Press, 1971). A well-balanced and highly critical article on Anand's fiction is R. K. Kaushik, "From Potter's Wheel to Dragon's Teeth," *Mahfil*, IV, 4 (Winter 1970), 17-31; also see Marlene Fisher's article in this volume, pp. 117-130.

22. *Coolie* was written in 1933 but was not published in England until 1936 by the Wishart Co. of London, a year after *Untouchable*, Anand's second novel. *Coolie* was subsequently reprinted in several editions: American (New York: Harmonsworth, 1945); two British (London: Hutchinson International Authors, 1947) and (London: The Bodley Head, Ltd., 1972); and Indian (Bombay: Kutub-Popular, n.d.).

23. To date, Anand has published nearly forty volumes, mostly novels, but also critical works on Indian art and civilization. His latest novel, *Morning Face* (Bombay: Kutub-Popular, 1968), a sequel to the autobiographical *Seven Summers* (London: Hutchinson Co., 1951), received the Sahitya Akademi Prize in English in 1971.

24. Zaheer, "Reminiscences," p. 50. It is difficult to establish the exact date of this first meeting. In writing about the establishment of the London group, Zaheer states: "Some Indian students held the first meeting of the Progressive Writers' Association in London in 1935." See Sajjad Zaheer, *Roshnāī* (Illumination) (Delhi: Azad Kitab Ghar, 1959), p. 11. Ali Sardar Jafri states that the first meeting of the group took place a few months prior to the first meeting of the International Congress for the Defence of Culture, held in Paris, 21-26 June 1935. See his *Taraqqī pasand adab* (Progressive Literature), 2nd ed. (Aligarh: Anjuman-i-Taraqqi Urdu, 1956), p. 183. Similarly, Khalilur Rahman Azmi, building on the data of Zaheer and Jafri, states that the association was started in 1935. See Azmi, p. 33.

    It should be noted, however, that critic Philip Henderson, writing in the *Left Review*, quotes copiously from what appears to be a preface or foreword to *New Indian Literature*, I (Spring 1936), a quarterly containing essays and criticism by Jawaharlal Nehru, M. D. Taseer, Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao, Jyotirmaya Ghosh, and K. S. Shelvankar, among others. The following is an extract from this

preface/foreword:

> "During the years following the Economic Crisis of 1931 and the consequent collapse of most of our accepted values, a number of youth Indian writers were to be seen talking over cups of tea in the cafés and garrets of Bloomsbury.
>
> Their talk was no longer of their personal predicament, but of the realities of politics and economics, of war and Fascism. And they murmured 'organization.'
>
> *On November 24th, 1934* [italics added], these little groups joined together and formed the Indian Progressive Writers' Association.
>
> In the course of a year they had built up a body of members with a panel consisting of poets, novelists, scholars and artists, who were either voluntary exiles from their own country or had been forced out by threats of violence." (Quoted in Philip Henderson, "Indian Writers," *Left Review* II [1936-37], 410.)

Given the fact that a number of details provided by Zaheer regarding the early phases of this Association are inaccurate or imprecise (noted in footnotes where possible), it would seem that the datum in the Henderson review regarding the first meeting, being written closer in time to the actual event, might be more accurate. Zaheer published no memoirs about the early phases of this organization until his *Yādeṅ* (Reminiscences), published in *Nayā adab* in 1941. The Pakistan edition of *Roshnāī* (Illumination) appeared in 1956 (Lahore: Muktabah-i-Urdu); the Indian edition, which I have used for this paper, appeared in 1959. Such inaccuracies might be attributed to the passage of time and to inexact recollection. However, one cannot assume that the 24 November 1934 meeting and the Nanking Restaurant meeting are the same. From the data available, an exact date cannot be pinpointed.

25. *Left Review*, II (1936-37), 240.

26. *Haṅs* (October 1936), quoted in Azmi, pp. 35-37. It is interesting that Premchand's English biographer, Madan Gopal, states that Premchand "published" a summary of the Manifesto and the aims of the Association in *Haṅs*, when in fact the entire manifesto, together with its aims, were presented. See Madan Gopal, *Munshi Premchand: A Literary Biography* (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1964), p. 413.

27. Sophia Wadia was born in Bogotá, Colombia, in 1901 of French parentage. She was educated at the University of Paris and Columbia University and is married to a Parsi. She is the founder and editor of *The Indian P.E.N.*, which began publication in 1934, and editor of *The Aryan Path*,

a journal with Theosophical leanings. Both publications are from Bombay. For further information about Madame Wadia and her participation in the International Congress for the Defense of Culture, as well as for Zaheer's remarks concerning her, see pp. 17-19.

28. Kanaialal Maneklal Munshi was born in Broach, Gujarat, in 1887. He was co-editor with Gandhi of *Young India* and was very active in both Gujarati literature and Indian politics. Until recently, he was president of the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan. He has written over seventy books in both English and Gujarati, including novels and autobiographical pieces.

Dattatraya Balkrishna Kalelkar, or "Kaka Sahab," was born in Satara, Maharashtra, in 1885. A close follower of Gandhi, he has written over thirty books, mostly in Gujarati but some in Hindi, including essays, travelogues and some autobiographical pieces.

29. There is no term in Urdu for "radical" as such. An approximate synonym is *intahā pasand*, or "extreme." The word "radical" could have been used in Hindi, in much the same way as the word "pamphlet" is used in Resolution 1.

30. Gopal, *Munshi Premchand*, p. 413.

31. "Some Unpublished Letters of Premchand," Benares, 10 May 1936, p. 32.

32. For an excellent discussion of this point, see Anjani Kumar Sinha's article on Socialist Realism in Hindi poetry, pp. 177-192.

33. Suniti Kumar Chatterji was born in 1890 in Sibpur, Howrah District, Bengal. He was educated at Calcutta University and the universities of Paris and London. Between 1922 and 1951 he served as Khaira Professor of Indian Linguistics and Phonology at Calcutta University; he also taught at the Univesity of Pennsylvania in 1951. A member of the Official Language Commission, he has published over twenty books in both Bengali and English, of which a number are now standard studies in linguistics. Chatterji was not, of course, the originator of the idea of Roman script for Indian languages. Pioneering work in this area was done by a Mr. A. Latiff, I.C.S., who did extensive work in developing a romanized Urdu script earlier in the century. See R.C. Mujumdar *et al.*, *An Advanced History of India*, 2nd ed. (London: The Macmillan Co., 1960), p. 963.

34. Zaheer, "Reminiscences," p. 51.

35. *Ibid.*

36. Nazrul Islam was born in 1889 in Churulia, Burdwan District, Bengal. He has published over twenty-five volumes, mostly poetry. On 1 November 1925, he organized the Labour Swaraj Party of the Indian National Congress, one of the activities of the Communist Party of

India, in an attempt to gain control of the Congress. See Overstreet and Windmiller, p. 79. An excellent critical evaluation of Nazrul's poetry, written much in the spirit of the newly-emerging Progressive Urdu criticism, appears in Akhtar Husain Raipuri, "Bengāl kī baghī shāir, nazrul islām" (Bengal's Revolutionary Poetry, Nazrul Islam), in *Adab aur inqilāb* (Literature and Revolution) (Bombay: National Information and Publishers Ltd., n.d.), pp. 132-154. The article is dated originally London, 10 November 1938. English studies of this poet include Serajul Islam Choudhury, *Introducing Nazrul Islam* (Karachi: Pakistan Publications, 1965); and Mizanur Rahman, *Nazrul Islam*, 3rd ed. (Dacca: Tarun Pakistan Publishers, 1966).

37. Zaheer states incorrectly that this story was subsequently published in *Asia* magazine. See "Reminiscences," p. 51. A check through the back files of *Asia* from 1930 to 1946, the year it ceased publication, shows that this story did not appear in its pages. The story is currently available in *The Barber's Trade Union and Other Stories* (Bombay: Kutub-Popular, 1959), pp. 106-116. This volume was originally published in 1944 by Jonathan Cape, London.

38. This novel originally published in Lucknow: Halqah-i-Adab, 1937; it has recently been reprinted in paperback in Delhi: Hind Pocket Books, n.d.

39. For a good article on the Reichstag fire, see K. Martin, "Reichstag Fire; or, An Experiment in Psychological Anarchy," *The Political Quarterly* (October 1933), pp. 587-594. Concerning Dimitrov, see H. Brown, "Georgi Dimitrov," *The Fortnightly Quarterly* (April 1934), pp. 385-394. Dimitrov later addressed the Seventh Comintern Congress in 1935 on the subject of the Indian Communist Party's taking an active part in the Indian National Congress, "facilitating the process of crystallization of further developing the national liberation movement" in that country. See Georgi Dimitrov, "The Offensive of Fascism and the Tasks of the C.I. in the Struggle for the Unity of the Working Class against Fascism," *Imprecor*, XI (20 August 1935), 971. For a comprehensive study of the French Popular Front, see Maurice Thorez, *France Today and the People's Front* (New York: International Publishers, 1936), pp. 155-207; and Peter J. Lamour, *The French Radical Party in the 1930's* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1964), pp. 103-176. The authoritative study of the situation in Austria is Charles A. Gulick, *Austria from Hapsburg to Hitler* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1948), II, 1133-1359. See Zaheer, "Reminiscences," p. 52.

40. *Left Review*, I (1935), 346.

41. Quoted in Azmi, p. 34.

42. This novel was translated into English by W. Fitzwater Wray as *Under Fire: The Story of a Squad* (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1919).

43. See Overstreet and Windmiller, pp. 74-75.

44. *Ibid.*, pp. 74, 113. The Comité is said to have established direct contact with Jawaharlal Nehru at this time; see the Government of India Intelligence Bureau report, *Communism in India, 1924-27* (Calcutta: Government of India, 1927), p. 92.

45. See Krishna Kripalani, *Rabindranath Tagore, A Biography* (New York: Grove Press, 1962), pp. 276-277. The long association between these two writers is depicted in *Rolland and Tagore*, ed. Alex Aronson and Krishna Kripalani (Calcutta: Visva-Bharati, 1945).

46. Zaheer, p. 52, states that the meeting took place in Baloulille, a "a famous hall of Paris." Azmi incorrectly states, p. 34, that the meeting took place in July.

47. E. M. Forster, "Writers in Paris," *New Statesman and Nation*, 6 July 1935, p. 9. Reprinted in *The Living Age*, September 1935, pp. 63-65.

48. Christina Stead, "The Writers Take Sides," *Left Review*, I (1935), 462.

49. Indian accounts, drawing from Zaheer's inaccurate account of this meeting, state that Romain attended. See Jafri, p. 183; Azmi, p. 34. Forster makes special mention of the fact that many of the writers who were supposed to attend did not, among them Thomas Mann, Karel Capek, Selma Lagerloef, Jules Romain and Romain Folland. See Forster, p. 9.

50. Oakley Johnson, "The World Congress of Writers," *International Literature* (Moscow), no. 8 (1935), p. 74. Johnson had recently been expelled from an American university for his Communist opinions; he was living in Moscow at the time and was writing a book on education. See Daniel Aaron, *Writers on the Left* (New York: Avon Books, 1965), p. 450, n. 24. Ehrenberg's speech to the Congress was printed in *The Daily Worker*, 10 July 1935, p. 5. Commenting on Babel's sense of humor and wit (cf. Forster, p. 9), Ehrenberg recalled in his introduction to Babel's selected works, published in Moscow, 1957, the enthusiastic reception given his speech:

> "For fifteen minutes he entertained the audience with several unwritten stories. The listeners laughed [he spoke fluent French], but at the same time they understood that, under the guise of amusing stories, the speaker was dealing with the essential nature of our people and our culture." (Quoted in Vera Alexandrova, *A History of Soviet Literature* [Garden City: Doubleday & Co., 1963], pp. 152-153.)

51. Maxim Gorky, "Gorki's Message," *The Daily Worker*, 18 July 1935, p. 5.

52. Michael Gold, travelling under his given name, Irvin Granich, fled to Mexico in 1917 to escape the draft; there he met M. N. Roy, with whom he became friendly. Both men started writing for Mexican radical publications during this period. See Overstreet and Windmiller, p. 23; also M. M. Roy, *Memoirs* (Bombay: Allied Publishers Private Ltd., 1964), pp. 106-113. Overstreet and Windmiller erroneously state that Irwin Granich was an alias used by Gold; Michael Gold is, in fact, the pen name of Irwin Granich.

53. Stead, p. 460.

54. Forster, "Writers in Paris," p. 7.

55. Zaheer, "Reminiscences," p. 52.

56. *Ibid.*

57. This speech is printed under this English title in *Life and Letters* (September 1935), pp. 12-18; translated by Edmund Stevens, it also appears in *International Literature* (Moscow), no. 10 (1935), pp. 81-85. The *Left Review* text, which I use, is titled "The Individual" (I [1935], 447-452). In his *Marxism and Aesthetics: A Selective Bibliography* (New York: Humanities Press, 1968), p. 38, Lee Baxendall comments that this speech is "the basic text for his [Gide's] idea of relations of Communism and literature."

58. Gide, p. 447.

59. *Ibid.*, p. 448. Cf. This statement with Zaheer's comments on pp. 32-33.

60. *Ibid.*, p. 450.

61. *Ibid.*, p. 451.

62. *Ibid.*

63. *Ibid.*, p. 452.

64. *Ibid.*

65. E. M. Forster, "Liberty in England," *London Mercury*, XXXII (August 1935), 327.

66. *Ibid.*, p. 328.

67. The book had in fact been published four years earlier.

68. Forster, "Liberty in England," p. 330.

69. In her report of the Congress, Christina Stead gives excerpts from speeches by Alfred Kantorowicz, Michael Gold, P. Gérome, Lion Feuchtwanger, André Chamson, Henri Barbusse, Waldo Frank, Heinrich Mann, John Strachey, Aldous Huxley, Louis Aragon, Luc Durtain, Paul Nizan, Julien Benda, J. Guéhenno, Amabel Williams-Ellis, Jean Cassou, Ilya Ehrenberg and André Malraux. Frank's speech, "The Writer's Part in Communism" appeared in *The Partisan Review*, February 1936, pp. 14-17. Jean-Richard Bloch's speech, "Literary Creation and Human Society," appeared in *Left Review*, I (1935), 464-468. We have noted Ehrenberg's speech (see p. n. 50). Other reports on the Congress were made by Michael Gold in *The New Masses*, 30 July 1935, pp. 9-11; 6 August 1935, pp. 13-15; and 13 August 1935, pp. 18-21. Gold also reported on the Congress in *The Pacific Weekly* (San Francisco), 9 November 1936, p. 308. Malcolm Cowley reported in *The New Republic*, 31 July 1935, p. 339. Oakley Johnson's piece in *International Literature* has been cited (see p. n. 49); he also wrote one for *The Daily Worker*, 22 July 1935, p. 5. The speech entitled "Rejoinder to the Sixty-four," which Lee Baxendall attributes in his bibliography to Malraux on the occasion of this June meeting, was actually presented before the French chapter of the International Association of Writers for the Defence of Culture in November 1935. See Baxendall, p. 40. For remarks about the organization set up following this Congress, see pp.

70. Johnson, "World Congress of Writers," p. 72.

71. Sophia Wadia, "The International Writers' Congress," *The Indian P.E.N.*, no. 3 (17 November 1935), p. 7.

72. *Ibid.*

73. *Ibid.*

74. *Ibid.*, p. 8.

75. *Ibid.*

76. *Ibid.*

77. *Ibid.*

78. *Ibid.*

79. *Ibid.*, p. 9.

80. Zaheer, "Reminiscences," p. 53. Note that Zaheer is not only incorrect about Madame Wadia's ethnic background but also about her marital status.

81. *Ibid.*

82. Johnson, "World Congress of Writers," p. 72.

83. *Ibid.*

84. The most comprehensive coverage of this meeting was Derek Kahn's *Left Review*, II (1936-37), pp. 481-490. His report also included the full text of Malraux's speech, "Our Cultural Heritage," pp. 491-496. Kahn wrote a less detailed report for *The Daily Worker* (London ed.), 25 June 1936, p. 3.

    The second Congress of the International Association of Writers for the Defence of Culture was held in Madrid in July 1937; but because of the Spanish civil war and the attack on Madrid only a few writers could get there. As a result, most of the sessions were held in Paris. Because this was an open meeting, and due to the events surrounding the locale where it was to be held, it received considerable press coverage. This was the final meeting before the outbreak of the war. For reports, see Malcolm Cowley, *The New Masses*, 10 August 1937, p. 16, and *The Bulletin*, August 1937, p. 1; Edgell Rickword, *Left Review*, III (1937), 381-383, including an abridgment of speeches by Benda, Bates, Last, Guillen and Gergamin. Michael Koltsov's speech appeared in *The New Masses*, 21 July 1937, pp. 14-15. Stephen Spender's notes on this conference are in *New Writing*, ed. John Lehmann, no. 4 (Autumn 1937), pp. 245-251. A report of the meeting was also in the London edition of *The Daily Worker*, 21 July 1937, p. 7.

85. Zaheer, "Reminiscences," p. 53.

86. Stead, p. 459.

87. Zaheer, "Reminiscences," p. 55.

88. *Ibid.*

89. See André Gide, *Back from the U.S.S.R.* and *Afterthoughts, A Sequel to Back from the U.S.S.R.*, trans. Dorothy Bussy (London: M. Secker & Warburg, 1937 and 1938, respectively).

90. Zaheer, "Reminiscences," p. 55.

91. *Ibid.*

92. *Ibid.*, pp. 51-52.

93. *Ibid.*, p. 55.

94. *Ibid.*, p. 56.

95. *Ibid.*

96. *Ibid.*, p. 57.

THE PROGRESSIVE WRITERS' MOVEMENT AND CREATIVE WRITERS IN URDU

Ahmed Ali

Karachi, Pakistan

In spite of what has been written so far, the Progressive Writers' Movement was essentially an intellectual revolt against the outmoded past, the vitiated tendencies in contemporary thought and literature, the indifference of people to their human condition, against acquiescence to foreign rule, enslavement to practices and beliefs, both social and religious, based on ignorance, against the problems of poverty and exploitation, and complete inanity to progress and life. It was the outcome of the desire to revive literature and the arts and to relate them to life, and assert the belief in man's ultimate destiny as a free and civilized being. The ideological interpretation was superimposed on the Movement after the first formal conference on an all-India basis in 1936 by the political section, which has remained in control ever since, but was not part of the Movement when it was originally started in 1932.

The Movement was really born in enthusiastic discussions preceding and followed by the publication of *Angāre* (Embers), that brave, adolescent book of short stories by Sajjad Zaheer, myself, Rashid Jahan and Mahmuduzzafar, which created such a furor and frenzy of denunciation that the authors were condemned at public meetings and in private. People read the book behind closed doors with relish, but denounced us in the open. We were lampooned and satirized, censured editorially and in pamphlets, and were even threatened with death. The book was eventually banned by the Government of the United Provinces, and the orthodox and God-fearing heaved a sigh of relief.

But *Angāre* grew into the Progressive Movement, and the formation of the Progressive Writers' Association was announced in the *Leader*, Allahabad, on 5 April 1933, in a letter signed by Mahmuduzzafar on behalf of the authors of *Angāre*, inviting correspondence at my address in Delhi. The intention of the sponsors then, i.e., in 1932-33, was a literary one, with no forecast of any affiliation with any political ideology or thought other than "the right of free criticism and free expression in all matters of the highest importance to the human race in general and the India people in particular . . . ", to quote from the *Leader* letter.

The fanfare that accompanied the first All-India Progressive Writers' Conference in 1936 was largely political and stamped with a certain ideology. The inclusion of writers from other parts of the country did place the Movement on a broad base, but it also led to its shrinking within a couple of years to a political platform, and the majority of the creative writers moved away from the official organization. The account of the Movement as written by Sajjad Zaheer two decades later in his book *Rūshnāī*, or *Roshnāī*,[1] contains only what he wishes to give out and eschews the real beginnings.

This book is one-sided and prejudiced and blackens out even outstanding "Progressive" works, including my own short story collections, *Sho'le* (Flames, 1934-35) and *Hamārī galī* (Our Lane, 1936), which were held out as models by Sajjad Zaheer himself at one point, and which are still considered the standard-bearers of the Movement. Some of his account is colored by personal and pathological considerations such that any airing of them would amount to assuming his own blasphemous tone, and is better avoided, as two wrongs do not make a right. The basic fact is that the Movement did not start in 1936, but in 1932, and was publicly announced in 1933. This, perhaps, did not fit into the political strategy of the date when *Rūshnāī* was published, as Sajjad Zaheer had then become identified with and was completely involved in the Communist Movement on the subcontinent. What had gone on before 1936 was not entirely political and labelled with a stamp, thus not worth acknowledging officially.

In 1932 the small coterie of friends, originally consisting of Sajjad Zaheer and myself, expanded to include Mahmuduzzafar and others; we shared a love of art and literature and, inspired by the youthful discovery of the strange new world of European culture, were filled with a zeal to change the social order and right the wrongs done to man by man. Estheticism of a creative kind was not common in the India of those days and the meeting of akin souls was not without its fullness and gratification. That age mellows down the heart's instincts and colors everything with the falsifying light of expediency and experience had never entered or discolored our thoughts. We dreamed of winning for Urdu and the regional languages the same respect, and for the Indian people the same dignity, which other civilized languages and societies enjoyed. Time has proved that neither were our dreams futile, nor has our achievement been insignificant. This small group had then lived in a colorful world of vivid imagination, alive to the sorrows of humanity and the joys of creation. It was a world of its own, yet it acted as a furnace for the passion that was eventually produced and generated. The poems of Asrarul Haq "Majaz" (1911-1955), the stories of Premchand (18811936) and those of the present writer and younger authors had shaken this world as nothing outside of moving political events -- a visit of the Simon Commission or the tragedy of Jallianwala Bagh -- had done. Nevertheless, the main figures of the Movement then, in 1932-33, had shared a love of sombreros, bright shirts and contrasting ties, collecting candlesticks and gargoyles, Bach and Beethoven, and an admiration for James Joyce and D. H. Lawrence and the *New Writing* poets, as well as Chekhov and Gorki. Whereas we were ardent nationalists and anti-British, Marxism was not a ruling passion, through a Progressive outlook was inherent in the revolt; and as the group expanded, leftist leanings, vague in some and pronounced in others, did become apparent, for there seemed no other way out of the social and political morass.

The traits that distinguished the writings of the creative section of the Movement, however, were realism, awareness of social, moral and intellectual backwardness, exposure of the hold of superstitious beliefs and practices, and a strong desire to rid society of all that cramped the speculative mind, and uphold the dignity and rights of man by focussing attention on the hungry and exploited. Some went a long way with us; others

only tried. But there was no one who was not touched or affected by our writing. Romantic tendencies persisted, as in a good deal of poetry and even in that unsuccessful attempt at a novel, *Landan kī ek rāt* (A Night in London) by Sajjad Zaheer himself, which discredits his own credo of a Marxist line in Progressivism.

This universe is not a comglomeration of static objects and ideas. Nature is in a state of constant flux and transformation, including man. The reality of today does not remain so necessarily tomorrow. Light and darkness, life and death, creation and destruction, are complementary and facets of the same reality, the Yin and Yang of the Chinese philosophers. Each thing is born with its opposite in its lap. Birth pangs end in the throes of death; an ideal achieved is outmoded by time. The reality of the 1930s has changed with the withdrawal of British imperialism from the subcontinent. The ideologists of the Movement eventually changed their stand to one of Communism. Already they are the apologists of the Movement today. None of the well known creative writers of the 1930s became a Communist, with one sole exception perhaps, Faiz Ahmed "Faiz" (b. 1912); but even this is more than dubious today. When an open attempt was made in 1938-39 to give the Movement a direct Communist turn, the creative section moved away from it. Even Prem Chand would have done so had he been alive, for he was never a Communist anyway, though he was Progressive in the sense most of us understood the word. Progress to us had not meant identification with the worker and the peasant alone, nor the acceptance of a particular ideology or set of political beliefs. Accepting one set of dogmas and sticking to it is the very negation of progress, and that is not what many of us had asked for or believed in, although that was what the custodians of the Movement persist in reiterating. Yet the caravan moves on --

The work of the two outstanding poets of the group consistently acclaimed by the orthodox -- the political -- section of the Movement as Progressive is curiously not "Progressive" in the ideological sense espoused by the custodians of the Movement. It is, instead, essentially romantic, as a glance at the works of Majaz and Faiz would show. There is in their poetry an awakened sense of wonder at the discovery of a new, vast field of approach to man and art, a new awareness of life and politics, social problems and slavery to convention. They have used imagery derived from life around them and have written with a deeper consciousness of self and fellow-beings, giving a new interpretation to old symbols and ideas. But Majaz, who could describe the journey of a railway train through the night (albeit towards a hurtling suicide) in images more memorable than Spender's in the poem on a similar theme, or describing the moon as the white turban of the mullah or the ledger of the moneylender, lived a life torn with intense inner and subjective strife, and died of drunkenness in a brawl in a tavern -- a completely romantic end already dramatized in the concluding stanza of his poem about the railway train.[2]

Faiz, though in life a serious and silent figure, is in his poetry largely preoccupied with love of a liaison kind, old conventions and the problems nearest to his heart, rather than the worker and the peasant, or even the common man. His is a personal voice steeped in the past and sharpened by a tone of revolt which, however, does not rise beyond itself or point to any definite political goal or go into analysis above the romantic tendencies inherent in it. The result is that Sajjad Zaheer, the Marxist custodian of the Movement, had to confess in 1956 in his preface to Faiz's third volume of poems, *Zindān nāmah* (Prison Narrative), that "all lovers of Faiz . . . hope and expect that from the points of view both of numbers and expression, those creations that have yet to come will be more valuable than those he had already published." In spite of this pious hope, the later poems of Faiz do not come up to Sajjad Zaheer's wish or expectations, the Lenin Peace Prize (1962) notwithstanding. In fact, they show an etiolation of his muse.

Looking at Faiz's work, one notes immediately the lilt of lyricism and a mellow wistfulness of amorous passion. His poem entitled "loneliness" is essentially Romantic:

> Now is someone coming, my weary heart?
> No; there is no one.
> It must be a passerby; he will go elsewhere.
>
> The night is on the wane; star dust
> Is being sprinkled on the sky;
> Dreamy lamps are reeling in the doors.
>
> Each sad heart waited, waited, but at last
> Has found her weary bed;
> Foreign dust has dimmed the marks of visiting feet.
>
> Blow out the candles, take away the cups,
> The bottles and the wine;
> Lock up your dreamy doors, for no one,
> No one will come here, my weary heart.

Few modern poems in Urdu achieve the effect this poem does in recreating an emotion and taking it forward to as to make it reverberate in the mind. But the thesis, as well as the synthesis, is romantic and Pre-Raphaelite in effect. Similarly, in a number of other poems in this volume entitled *Naqsh-i-faryādī* (The Questioning Word, 1943), Faiz voices corresponding sentiments in various addresses to his beloved, reiterating in crisp imagery thoughts of the eternal past, using words and phrases from Ghalib or the resonance of Eliot's "The Hollow Men" of whom the hero of Faiz's poems often vaguely reminds one. His conception of love and his sense of wonder in the face of amorous passion are no more dynamic than or antithetical to romantic emotions. When he does make an attempt at destroying the past accumulation of conventional love, he cannot go beyond the sad nihilism of Ernest Dowson, as in the poem beginning:

> Do not ask, beloved, for the love of yesteryears.

In *Zindān nāmah,* one had hoped that he would rise to an expression of revolt in a poem such as:

> In the path of autumn we looked for spring;
> From the black night we demanded beauty.
>
> We passed our days oft times in the treasure house of thought,
> Oft times in the talk of the beloved.

but he recoils into himself with the succeeding lines:

> I complain not of separation, for by this means
> I have cemented the relations of our hearts.

and the note of revolt is smothered in the sub of sentiment, and Sajjad Zaheer's expectation of "progress" is reversed in direction.

In the other poems of this volume, all of which were written in jail, there is the same yearning for beauty and the pain of love:

> The same old blood of the rose flows down the branch,
> The same old brilliance in the shades of the rose garden;
>
> The same old head, the same old threshold on which to bow,
> The same old life and the same beloved still.
>
> No one is kind today, but the lane
> Of loving friends is kind all the same.
>
> The lightning of sorrow fell a hundred times, and yet
> The glory of the nest remains intact.
>
> Tonight is the night of union and of love:
> The same old tale is repeated by the heart.
>
> The moon and the stars come not this way,
> Though even in prison the same sky stretches overhead.

Added, however, is weariness and a desire for change from the old beloved and life itself as the heart's impulses show weakening. Thus, even in the political poem where one expected a leftist expression of the credo, there is the same turning away to romanticism.

> Before the death of bone and flesh,
> Before this voice is stilled,
> Speak, for Truth is still alive;
> For all that you have yet today,
> There's time enough for year or nay.

This does not mean that Faiz ceases to be a Progressive, for romanticism itself, of the Majaz and Faiz type, like the French Revolution, can be revolutionary and Progressive, though not in the sense Sajjad Zaheer and his political colleagues use and mean the term. For this reason, they adopted the rigid ideological line and from creative writing moved to propaganda, and shut out the creative writers. But since the poet must remain true to himself or sacrifice the inner truth to politics, Faiz has remained a romantic in his poetry and accepted the risk of being labelled a dubious politician.

This brief analysis of a living poet still considered the pride of the Movement by the custodians of the Movement themselves should show the sharp divergence between the orthodox credo and the practice of the creative section of the Progressive Movement. I have not discussed the prose writers, as no novelist or story writer has been consistently acclaimed by the political section of the Movement as "Progressive" in the sense Faiz has been, with the exception of Saadat Hasan Manto (1912-1955) perhaps. But after the first few brilliant flashes of deeply-felt social wrongs and intense desire for social justice, Manto ended up, due to his own peculiar psychological predilections, in a preoccupation with the world of the socially wronged and sexually exploited woman, whether she was the heroine of his "Black Shalwar" or the red-light district of Bombay itself, and became the protagonist of erotic literature and perverted tastes apparent in Urdu writing today. This is not meant to deride Manto's position as a writer. The question is of Progressive writing, for a further consideration of which I should like to refer to my own discussion of the subject in the epilogue to my collection, *Maut se pahle* (Before Death), which is entitled "Art, Politics and Life," published by the Insha Press in 1945.

Among literary critics, the late Majnoon Gorakhpuri (1906-1972) has been officially blessed; but his observation that "bread" is not all, and that there are other factors that go to make life complete and whole, is significant. Other critics and writers, who were most active in the Movement during the 1930s and who were Progressive in any wider sense of the word, have been bypassed by Sajjad Zaheer, or at best slurred over or slandered, in his account of the Movement.

The basic fault in Sajjad Zaheer's view lies in calling the Progressive Movement as a whole a political one. For the majority of writers and readers, it was a revolutionary movement. Its appeal was based then and still remains in the desire to rid society of vitiated tendencies, to uphold the right of free expression and criticism in all matters of the greatest importance to mankind, intellectual advance and a higher standard of art and life and literature. It heralded an intellectual revolution as significant as anything since Rousseau's affirmation that "Man is born free, yet everywhere he is in chains," and Nietzsche's declaration that God was dead. The most earth-shaking utterances of the Movement are to be found in *Angāre*, which, in spite of its adolescene and immaturity, exposed discredited doctrines and dogmas which no one had dared attack, and set into motion a whole chain of actions and reactions. It was value-free and did not try to impose values

with violence or threats of violence, or by foisting any ideology, as has been done by the official custodians since 1936, and particularly in 1938-39. Such action resulted in the open break between them and the creative section of the Movement, including the present writer who, as editor of their English-language quarterly journal, *New Indian Literature*, was asked to toe the Party line by eliminating all that was not significant from the point of view of workers and peasants. Since the split, what has clashed, however, is not values, but motives and political compulsions, for man's artistic achievement is free of dogma and nothing can be proved about it.

Because it was human, the Movement took a wide range of writers into its fold, during the early years of its existence at least. In this lay its success and far-reaching import. This is why both Majaz and Faiz in poetry and Prem Chand and Manto in fiction could come within its purview and be acknowledged as parts of its logic and reasoning. They were the romantics standing at one end, but the Movement had its realists and social thinkers as well. That it died under the weight of rigidity was no irony. The half-hearted, espionage-ridden attempts at its revival prove only the inadequacy of the political approach to a basically intellectual revolution, and the failure of politics to steer a spontaneous movement into the narrow channels of uncompromising ideology. The Progressive Writers' Movement has made its achievements and has served its purpose. Now, in conformity with "progress," only a new movement can take its place. The contradictions of today will point to their own solution. Old bottles do not fit new wine, nor old forms new ideas.

EDITOR'S NOTES

1. For the benefit of those who do not know Urdu, it should be pointed out that Mr. Ali is punning; *roshnāī*, the usual manner of pronouncing the title of Sajjad Zaheer's book, means "light" or "illumination"; *rūshnāī* means "ink"; both words are spelled identically in Urdu.

2. For the edification of readers, here is a translation by the editor of the poem to which Mr. Ali refers, entitled *"Rāt aur rel"* (Night and Train), taken from the collection *Āhang* (Melody, 1st ed. 1938):

> Again the train started from the station, wave-like,
> Singing softly in midnight silence,
> Tottering, swaying, its whistle blowing, frolicking,
> Enjoying the cold valley-mountain air,
> That pleasant *sarod* with its thrumming in sharp wind gusts,
> The echo of rain in dust storms coming,

Like the modulation of a wave, like a mermaid's song,
Singing thousands of songs in every tone,
Singing sweet lullabies to children,
Showing golden dreams to young girls,
Stumbling, bending, humming, swaying,
Singing out in joy to the beat of small bells,
Coquettishly bending at every turn, coil, bend,
Like a bride embarrassed by her own charms,
Glittering, trembling in the darkness of night,
Spilling mercury on the rails far ahead
As if a royal marriage procession had come out at midnight,
Coming in ecstasy, with echoes of festive music,
Spilling sparks here and there in the air,
Making flowers rain upon the hem of the billows of air,
Becoming faster, step by step, continually,
Gradually showing its real shape,
Involuntarily ascending to the mountain's chest
As if a serpent crawling ecstatically upon the ground,
As if a star, broken up, rushing from heaven,
Coming down from the mountains to the field,
Like a whirlwind swelling up in the fields
Showing dust-storm force in the jungle,
Making stars that light night tremble,
Startling wild birds in their nest,
Twisting with such tumult
Recalling the anger of ancient gods,
With flashing lightning, like Rustam's horse, Rakhsh, unbridled,
Jumping ditches, slinking away from the hills,
In pastures, going like sweet-gaited streams,
In valleys, hovering like a cloud,
Showing as the reflection of the waterfall on a hill,
Showing like the Lamp of Sinai on a desert,
Shaking its head in rapture, its hair dishevelled,
Starting to play the instrument of eternity in a state of joy,
Raining fire from its mouth in a state of fury,
Crawling, twisting, rolling, restless, panting heavily,
Exciting the hidden fire of its heart,
By no cause offended, irritated, dishevelled,
Beating the world-heart with frequent cries,
On the river bridge, continually flashing, calling out,
Feeling proud of causing such a noise,
Showing a string of lamps in the middle of the river,
Making particles of sand shine on the shores,
Running fast, suddenly rushing into the tunnel's mouth,
Singing out for joy, roaring, singing,
Ahead of it, pouring out glances fraught with search,
Worried from frightful scenes of night
Like a criminal, afraid, shrinking back,

Like a pauper trembling in the cold,
Here and there establishing its authority of quick speed,
Sending a wave of life through the desert and inhabited places,
Scattering a veil of darkness on passing scenes,
Bringing new scenes to the eye,
Destroying the writings of past ages on the heart's pages,
Showing interesting dreams of the present and future,
Dropping scorn on senseless rocks,
Smiling at mountains, looking the sky in the eye,
Tearing to pieces the evening-darkness hem,
Raining arrows continuously on the castle of night,
If anything comes into its range, grinding it down,
Telling then the mysteries of the evolution of life,
Out of pride kicking the desert's brow,
Again showing the coquetry of a fast gait,
Unfurling a banner, like a rebellious wave,
Going ahead fearlessly with a typhoon-like thunder,
A rebellion in each motion,
Singing songs of mankind's greatness,
At every step, along with the thunder of cannons,
The echo of whizzing bullets coming,
Those hundreds of wild drums sounding in the air,
Waving in the air the envigorating voice of the bugle --
In short, going forward, flying without danger or dread,
It makes the mind-blood of a fiery-tongued poet boil.

A PERSONAL VIEW OF THE PROGRESSIVE WRITERS' MOVEMENT

Prabhakar Machwe

Sahitya Akademi

I thank the organizers of this symposium for giving me the opportunity to reminisce. I would like to state at the outset that whatever I express here is an entirely personal view, my own personal thoughts and opinions.

The period during which the Progressive Writers' Association and Movement were formed in India in 1936 and the decade following has become a part of history. Many writers and thinkers who inspired this Movement have passed away. A great deal of writing has been directly guided or influenced by the momentous events in the national life of India: Gandhi's individual *satyāgrah* in 1940, the "Quit India" Movement in 1942, the Bengal famine in 1943, the partition of India and independence in 1947, the murder of the Mahatma in 1948 after the communal riots, and the many national development activities after 1947. World War II had hung its looming shadow over India and the rise of Nazism and Fascism in Europe was resented by intellectuals all over the world. The War ended with the use of the atom bomb, a fact which was also resented by writers the world over who loved peace and freedom. Later the regime of Stalin was equally deplored by many progess-loving writers, even in the Soviet Union. Today thinkers and writers condemn the many military dictatorships in the world. The quest for an egalitarian society, with social justice and equal opportunities for all, with the ending of discrimination and exploitation between man and man, along with the war against caste, color, creed or class difference, is not yet over. But "we shall overcome."

Let me confess that I have never been, nor am I now, an active member of any political organization. I have been a student of philosophy, history and literature since 1934, when at the age of seventeen I received my B.A. from a Christian college in Central India. My background was lower middle-class. I was the youngest in a large family; my father died when I was small; my mother, very religious. I learned several Indian languages at an early age and have always been a voracious reader. Romantic poets and stories of terrorists and revolutionaries appealed to my adolescent mind. Nietzsche and Gandhi were the special philosophers taught to us in college. The problem of violence and non-violence has always bothered me. I studied Buddhism and was of two minds about the relevance of God in modern times. The appalling poverty and social inequality all around me were, to my thinking, entirely man-made. The study of history made me aware of the slavery imposed on Indians for centuries by the feudal and arbitrary rule of maharajas and Mughals; later by the British Raj, with its clever triumvirate, or *trimūrti:* the missionaries, the East India Company, and the adventurist soldier-statesmen. At that period in my life, the attainment of freedom seemed to be the primary aim. Bhagat Singh was sentenced to death when I was thirteen. Many innocent, young freedom fighters were subjected to physical and mental torture for using the simple word "Liberty."

I had the privilege of travelling to many places of pilgrimage along with my mother. As she was not literate, I read out to her very difficult books of philosophical verse in Marathi. I had my Sanskrit at home, as tradition demanded, but I still felt maladjusted. I felt that books did not fully satisfy me. I was a very shy student, avoided sports and enjoyed painting and writing poetry. At a Jain *upāsarā*, or hermitage, nearby there was a very good library of old Hindi journals. I learned Gujarati from my elder brother and studied Bengali at college. I was very fond of the romantics: Shelley, Keats, the Brownings, *et al.*; I had read Tagore, Kalapi Gadkari, Ghalib and Nirala. The first conflict I had in my mind was between the epic and the lyric forms of poetry, the much-discussed classical and romantic modes. There were occasional fits of sublime love for The Unknown; Kabir and Tukaram appealed to me more than the other Vaishnava poets. My first lessons in social changes I learned from Kabir, and later from many Shelley-like poets, who sang: "Arise, arise / there is much blood which denies your bread. / Let your wounds have eyes!" In the *Indore Christian College Journal* of 1934 an article of mine appeared -- "Three Mystics: Kabir, Omar Khayyam and Tagore." I tried to cull and collate some lines of these three poets on love and death. I was already vaguely aware that some literature served and helped revolution; but to my thinking, this sort of literature was confined mostly to Barin Ghosh and Khudiram Bose's account about the Andamans, or the legendary heroes of 1857.

I thought that caste-bound religion, which had become fossilized in the form of mere ritualism and dogmatism, was the root cause of regress. In 1934 in Delhi I met Prem Chand at the Hindi Sahitya Sammelan and I was mightily influenced by him. I wrote for his journal, *Hans* (Swan). From 1935 to 1937, I was an M.A. student in philosophy at Agra College where I came into contact with some "live" Socialists; among them was one Krishaswamy, a bearded chap who used to distribute "secret" literature, mostly English books in the Little Lenin Library and some smuggled pamphlets banned in British India, *The Communist Manifesto* among them. I was attracted to the writings of Marx and Engels, but the pacifism of Gandhi and his philosophical resemblance to Buddha and Christ appealed to me most. I used to think that Jesus also was a Socialist. He drove away the money-changers and he glorified the notion of "one meal a day and our tattered clothes." So I read Tolstoy and Gorky and Chekhov on the one hand, as well as Bertrand Russell, Bergson and Croce on the other. My confusion deepened. The world, it seemed, needed to be changed. But the problem of ends and means was there. *Ends and Means* was the title of a book by Aldous Huxley to which K. S. Shelvankar wrote a reply, *Ends are Means*. J. B. S. Haldane's *Marxism and Other Sciences* and several other books, then considered to be a leftist, also influenced me.

At age nineteen I stood first in my M.A. class, then took my first job, unfortunately, as secretary to the Nationalist textile workers' union, the Mazdur Sangh, but soon quit. I qualify this event as "unfortunately" because I should not have seen so much misery at such a young age. The job had created a sense of frustration in me. I could not change the world, I realized; however, I wished to do so. My wishes were neither the horses which marched in the French Revolution, nor in the Russian one. At this

point too I read Trotsky's books, particularly *Literature and Revolution*. Upton Sinclair's *Mammonart* also appealed to me. Let me here narrate another incident which I still remember vividly. In 1934 I went to the Bombay session of the Indian National Congress, where as a student movement delegate I saw the founders of the Congress Socialist Party close up. Today I remember those faces and wonder at my own easy credibility. They all appealed to me then as great revolutionary heroes and world-changers. I was awe-struck. But later, one by one, these gods failed me: Sri Sampuranand became the Governor of Rajasthan, yet an ardent believer in astrology, a very irrational addiction of many a great mind of India; Sri Achyut Patwardhan later became a devotee of the mystic J. Krishnamurty, as did Sri P. Y. Deshpande, once a revolutionary author in Marathi; Sri Ashok Mehta later joined the Central Government as a minister, then resigned Many others became camp-followers of Acharya Vinoba Bhave, a *sāmya-yogī*. I am not accusing anyone of anything. Probably each one had his or her own problems and ways in which to seek the self, and through it, the world. But the mystic's way was surely not the Socialist's. There was an apparent contradiction in these two ways which deeply afflicted me; every "Socialist" I met in those days turned out to be an individualist later on. My romantic revolutionary dream was shattered. Seeds of nihilism were in the very birth pangs of a *Brave New World* and *1984*. Was all mysticism mere "sublime nonsense," as Engels had put it, I asked myself.

There were exceptions. Acharya Narendra Dev had all of my respect. I met him in Sevagram, Gandhi-ji's *āshram*, where I was married on 7 November 1940. One of my long 400-line Hindi poems, "Marx and Gandhi," appeared in Narendra Dev's fortnightly, *Sangharsh* (Conflict), on 26 January 1940. Among my friends were many active Socialists, trade union workers, Communists, Royists (Radical Democrats). But personally I was attracted to Gandhi. I resigned my trade union job, quoting Romain Rolland from *I Will Not Rest:* "With all the oppressed, against all the oppressors!" In 1938 I joined a small college as a lecturer in logic and educational psychology; I taught for ten years. It was here that the Progressive Writers' Association had a branch office and my friend, the late Gajanan Madhav Muktibodh, was its active worker. In 1938 I also came into contact with another great Marxist and Buddhist as well, a person who could never reconcile the two positions, resulting in a dichotomy which led to his tragic end after a prolonged loss of memory -- Mahapandit Rahul Sankrityayan, to whom I looked as my mentor. At this time I also met the late Dharmanand Kosambi, who was a great rationalist. All these persons and books influenced my thinking and writing. Yet the anguish of the soul had no end.

Then came the horrid nightmare, the great World War II, later named by the Communists as the "People's War." I was in the Sevagram *āshram* when Gandhi's individual *satyāgraha* was launched. I became a confirmed pacifist. My faith in humanism deepened; it had become more scientific by my reading of dialectical materialism.

My young friends, Muktibodh, N. C. Jain, and Dr. N. V. Joshi, a philosopher who wrote his doctoral dissertation on Bergson's *The Metaphysics of Individuation*, were running a small village school in Central India. I painted on its

walls a series of fresco-like drawings on the history or human slavery and freedom. I was still of two minds: Gandhi or Marx? These were the only two choices. Sometimes they seemed to overlap. Here Nehru's writings helped me to resolve the conflict. Acharya Javadekar's work in Marathi, *Ādhunik bhārat* (Modern India), provided a fine analysis; he called Indian nationalism "spiritualistic nationalism," with credit going to Nehru who had made it more modern and scientific.

Two poets of considerable power attracted me very much. After Nietzsche, here were two worshippers of *Wille zur macht:* Iqbal and Savarkar. I did not know Persian, but I had read Browne's *A History of Persian Literature* and Nicholson's translation of Iqbal's *Asrār-e-khūdī* (Secret of Selfness). I read Savarkar, of course, in the original Marathi. *Khūdī* (Self) and *khudā* (God)? "Whatever is in the self is in the universe." I became deeply involved in Sufism and Vedanta. I read Hafiz, Rumi, Shabsatari, Attar and Khayyam. But Iqbal was against the Sufis and Savarkar wrote against the passivity and life-and-world-negation of the Buddhists and Jains. Savarkar was also anti-non-violence, anti-Gandhi. But both wrote such heart-capturing poetry! Can one have a totally militaristic ideology and also be a great poet? Ezra Pound was called mad, a Fascist. I read many poets who joined the Spanish resistance movement. Could violence be met only with super-violence? Were mere words helpless before arms?

In the summer of 1943, S. H. Vatsyayan and Shahid Latif convened an Anti-Fascist Writers' Conference in Delhi. I met many Hindi writers, as well as writers in Urdu, Punjabi and other Indian languages. I remember having met Dr. Abdul Aleem, now Vice-Chancellor of Aligarh University, Saghar Nizami and Krishan Chander at this conference. Many young Progressive writers were present: the late Muktibodh, Prakash Chandra Gupta, Rangeya Raghav and others. This conference was a very broadly-based writers' meet and writers of all dispositions were present: various shades of Socialists, right from the Buddhist Bhadant Anand Kausalyay, to Gandhians, Congress Socialists, Communists, Radical Democrats, Forward Blockists, and even plain, small writers like myself who did not swear by any particular denominational variety of leftism. At one session there was a discussion about "anti-Fascist music." One of the organizers replied to a query that any music, the proceeds of which went to the cause, was anti-Fascist. Here by one firm resolution writers and artists were asked to become fighters against Fascism. I wrote a small book in Hindi, *Sangīnon kā sāyā* (Shadow of Bayonets) which contained many anti-Fascist stories. The Progressive Writers' Association's Hindi journals, *Nayā sāhitya* (New Literature), *Janayug* (Peoples' War) and many other papers published my poems and stories.

I was from my earliest childhood anti-authoritarian. I suspected any kind of outer imposition or militaristic regimentation. My ideological break with many official Party friends came on a small point. One fine morning I received a telegram: "Stalin is dead; send a poem." I was not the least inspired. I thought that this request was too much. They had sent a similar telegram earlier when another lady Party comrade had died. I could not dash

off poems on order. How could one feel intensely for a person with whom one had never had any contact? I recoiled from so-called "ultra-left" leftism. I felt that there was something wrong in any kind of blind belief. For ten years I had taught students the syllogism: "All men are mortal; Socrates is a man; therefore, Socrates is mortal." I could not shed my tears for any mortal for just any sentimental or ceremonial need. Camus's stranger did not even weep when his mother died.

In 1940 in Gandhi's *āshram* I met Raja Rao. We walked together for hours everyevening. He had translated his *The Cow of the Barricades* into Kannada; from this version I made a Hindi verse rendering with Raja Rao's help. I had many long discussions with Kishorilal B. Mashruwala on Gandhian ethics. Gandhi seemed the only way, though the stoic fasts and monastic self-denial of his followers did not appeal to me. I hated masochism as much as I disliked sadism.

I came to the conclusion that all extremist, militaristic ideologies are irrational, so I could not ascribe to Hindu militarism either. My hatred for it deepened after Gandhi's murder in 1948. At this time I left my lectureship in Central India and joined All India Radio where I remained until 1954.

Savarkar wrote in his Marathi Literary Conference presidential address: "Break the pens and take up the sword!" To my great surprise, an Urdu poet, who did not read Marathi and who was diametrically opposed to Sarvarkar's ideology, said the same thing during the war in 1943: "Rise and take up arms! / Break your pens!" Probably two opposite poles attract each other. Militarists and anti-militarists, Fascists and Communists of all shades and ranks, unite! They had nothing to lose, except their compassion. So once the premise is accepted, there could be a logical justification for any Holy War, a War for Peace, a War-to-End-All-War, etc. But Gandhi had warned that violence led to super-violence; it is a chain reaction. Violence is a futile and sterile exercise.

After Gandhi's murder in 1948, I wrote many poems, stories and reportage. I wrote against sectarianism, communalism, narrow and blind hatred. Yet I was dubbed by some leftists as a reactionary. I became more and more skeptical about any collectivist writing or collectivist criticism. One of the reasons for my change of heart was my strong belief in change of heart. The dogmatic party-wallahs thought in exclusivist terms: Either you are with us or against us. This kind of "A" and "Non-A" division never appealed to me. My upbringing and mental make-up, fed on the agnostic Jain notion of *syādvād*, was against it. It was more so when critics overnight called some romantics "revolutionaries" and, overnight, some Progressives "reactionaries." In 1948 Rahul Sankrityayan was expelled from the Communist Party of India for having presided over the Hindi Sahitya Sammelan and for advocating Hindi as the national language. I was present at that historic meeting when Rahul's followers were divided into two camps.

I began to read about many other varieties of religious experiences and their counterparts in the leftist lamaseries: the different Communistic experiments in China, Yugoslavia, Cuba and so on. The Indian Communists were also not a homogeneous lot. There were the bomb-throwing terrorists and there were the sophisticated armchair theorists. There were republican supporters of the C.P.I. and staunch brahmins flaunting their pigtails. There were theoretical anarchists and Gandhian Communist supporters like Pandit Sunderlal or Ravishankar Maharaj. Among writers the confusion presented a muddy pallet. To speak only of Hindi, Dr. Rambilas Sharma and Shivdan Singh Chauhan fell out on the issue of whether to call the poet Pant a Progressive. Was Vivikananda a Progressive or not? Bengali journals published articles for and against this question. In Maharashtra, it was asked whether Tilak was a progressive. And what about Iqbal and Savarkar? The question boiled down to the fact that one's personal commitment to religion was not contradictory to Progressive writing. There were many good Christian Communists; in Kerala, even Catholic Communists; there were also Muslim Communists. Was only a Hindu Communist a self-contradiction? After all, Hinduism preached polytheism as well as co-existence.

I will not say anything about or name self-styled living Progressive writers. As I believe in the notion of change of heart, perhaps they will not remain the same diehards tomorrow. Every human being is capable of growth and revision. As Whitman says: "Very well when I contradict myself, / I am large, I contain multitudes." As a student of both Vedanta and Hegel, I was well acquainted with the "negation of negation." But I could not believe wholly that quantity changes quality. I wrote a long essay entitled "Marxism and Esthetics," which was originally published in *Sammelan patrikā* (Organization Magazine), Allahabad, in 1951; it was reproduced in *Siddhānt aur adhyāyan* (Theory and Research, 1952) and later in *Santulan* (Balance), my collection of essays published in 1954. In 1948 in the Marathi journal *Abhiruci* (Inclination) I wrote a long article entitled "Marx and Sartre." My erstwhile comrades gradually became my bitter critics. I was a lost soul to them. As I recall, Lenin had said of Shaw, "A good soul lost amongst Fabians."

The Progressive Writers' Association became a slightly lumbering and less effective organization after independence. Many of the old comrades had taken jobs in films, radio and other mass media. The *"Hindī-cīnī-bhāī-bhāī"* ("Indians and Chinese are brothers") period was also over and another disillusionment came in 1963. I wrote a series of articles against Chinese propaganda and Indian writers. Many Progressive writers accused me of taking up a kind of reactionary line. For a writer who is steadfast to certain intense human moments and who desires to communicate, I found the lack of continuity a very painful experience. If one changes the definitions of words like "idealism" or "realism" under external pressures, or party orders, or for any extra-literary considerations, one is bound to end up with some kind of lesser type of literature. Old Chinese poetry is indeed superior to whatever versification-called-poetry published in modern official literary journals in China. I felt that Kabir or Nirala were greater "realists"

than many young men who just dashed off pseudo-poetry or propaganda verse to please their respective political gurus or bosses, or out of loyalty to extra-territorial credos. Great writing was never created without deep conviction. How could one change at will the color of one's skin, hair or eyes? A writer's original nature is bound to interfere with his world-view formation. Marx said, "How can one climb one's own shoulders?"

All this musing apart, the fact cannot be denied that the Progressive Writers' Movement, advocating as it did Socialist Realism, did, in spite of all its human weaknesses, play a very catalytic role in the development of modern Indian literature. I feel that this Movement brought forth positively the following significant changes in writers' attitudes:

1. Writers became more aware of international problems. They took sides on world issues. Their horizons were broadened.

2. They became conscious of a continuous war against exploitation, poverty, ignorance, blind superstition, narrow casteism and communalism.

3. The growing gap between cities and villages, between so-called sophisticated languages and rural dialects, was bridged. Writers chose to go back to villages, to tribal areas, to folk songs and folk tales, for greater inspiration, new themes.

4. There occurred a profound change in the male-dominated moral code which allowed expression to a long-suffering section of humanity -- women -- to express frank appreciation of feminism and now, of Women's Lib. Sometimes it may take the form of protest for protest's sake. One Progressive woman writer wrote in *Hans* that Mira Bai was a rabid feminist. Yet the Progressive writers took up the cause of many such works which were unnecessarily dubbed as pornographic or obscene. I remember Manto's Urdu stories or Ugra's "Chocolate" or Nirala's *"Kukurmuttā"* (Mushroom) as some of the early instances of untabooed and uninhibited writing. The double standard whereby a sexy Western writer would be translated into Indian languages and be freely accepted, but an Indian writing in much the same idiom would be accused of vulgarity, was exposed. Naturalism and pathologically morbid writing were distinguished from realism.

5. Realism could also lead to surrealism; thus Freud could be complementary to Marx. It was a new dimension which was pointed out by many Progressive critics. In the beginning some Progressive critics mechanically toed the line of "vulgar sociologists," which stated that all writing should be political, purposive and tendentious. But later they realized that this stance was self-defeating. Hence, psychological fiction was not totally banned by the Progressive fold. Even Lenin, after all, liked to read Balzac.

6. Socialist Realism definitely gave a new impetus to the writing of problem plays and stark neo-realistic drama without the usual sentimental frills and high melodrama.

7. Progressivism did give a number of new words to prose. Many translations were being made into Indian languages which very much needed technical terminology. In 1947 at the Progressive Writers' Association Conference in Allahabad, I was asked to write a paper on technical terminology in Hindi; it was later published in *Hans*. There were three points of view on the subject: (1) one which advocated that we borrow and coin technical terms from Sanskrit, as advocated by Dr. Raghuvira; (2) one which held that we should borrow and coin from Persian, as Pandit Sunderlal desires; and (3) one which states that we should absorb indigenous synonyms and bring the language of science closer to the spoken word and the language of the people. I advocated this third and this concept was put to use in *The Dictionary of Administrative Terms (English-Hindi)*, which Rahul Sanskrityayan and I edited in 1948.

8. Personally, my poems in the anthology *Tār-saptak* (Seven Chords, 1943), which were written under the influence of the Progressives, opened for me new directions in experimental poetry. Under the influence of this thinking, I discovered many new vistas of experience and expression. I also became aware of its limitations.

Many progressives later became anti-Progressives, or even neo-mystics. I have several instances in mind, primarily from Hindi: Nirala's last phase as a devotional lyricist; Sumitranandan Pant, a Marxist in the 1940s, became an Aurobindian later; Dinkar's latest work is entitled *Harinām* (The Name of Hari, or God); Bachchan wrote *Bangāl kā kāl* (Bengal Famine) in 1943 and has now written *Sysiphus Versus Hanuman;* Agyeya's story *"Badlā"* (Change) was proscribed when it appeared in *Hans* in 1947, yet his latest novel reveals a strong existentialist tone; Nagarjun, so pro-Russian earlier, has bitterly criticized Soviet action in Czechoslovakia; Narendra Sharma, Dr. Suman, Girijakumar Mathur and Anchal have all continued to remain romantic revolutionaries -- more romantic than revolutionary, I might add. This later group of poets used titles which were juxtapositions of opposites: *Mittī aur phūl* (Dust and Flowers), *Pralaya-sarjan* (Deluge and Creation), *Nāsh aur nirmān* (Destruction and Construction), and *Aparajita aur karil (Aparajita*-Flower and Brambles). A very significant repetition of love-and-death imagery, I feel.

Now I well understand that political expediency can never guide writers in general and poets in particular. Yet there are moments in history when writers cannot but be influenced by the spirit of the times, the *Zeitgeist*. There is no ready-made formula for the writers to be "committed" to a social cause like a crusader, or to what extent they should be "involved" in a violent or non-violent "direct action" program. It all depends on each one's temperament, extroversion, sensitivity and capacity. One need not accuse Tagore or Prem Chand of being less nationalistic or Progressive because they did not lead protest marches or court imprisonment. Yet a totally isolationist or ivory-tower point of view is equally untenable. When

terrible things are happening in any part of the world, how can one remain unconcerned and silent? A writer worth his salt cannot be purblind to great unprovoked killings, genocide, bombing of civilian habitations with napalm or other such missiles, concentration camps or any curbs on human freedom. Ultimately all of this is surely suicidal to human existence. Socialist or non-Socialist, any kind of realism should lend us to think that life is for living. Nietzsche has written: "First live, then philosophize."

When the survival of humanity is at stake, to sit and quibble and split hairs in discussing the semantics of Socialism or Communism is idle. I would rather nurse the sick and serve the cause of supplying bread to the starving millions of half the world than sit in judgment over the desirability or otherwise of opening a drugstore or missile base on Mars or the moon, or discussing the sexual habits of some obscure, primitive islanders, or spending a lifetime deciphering the hieroglyphs of Mohenjo-Daro, or count how many times an aspirated consonant has occurred in a lesser-known old Sanskrit text. I think that creative writers and crtiics cannot afford to lose their perspective. Knowledge is for man; all literature is for man's progress. Technology has reversed gears; man has become a tool, a guinea pig in the hands of certain power-crazy, war-mongering Big Machines busy in an outmoded "balance-of-power" game of diplomacy. How long shall we suffer this situation? I do not care whether I am labelled a Progressive or Socialist or realist; but I do want Man's progress, Man's betterment. It will not come to pass unless all nuclear destructive ammunition is defused. It will not come to pass unless all wars end.

BENGALI POETS TODAY:
THE CONFLICT OF SELF AND THE WORLD

Amitendranath Tagore

Oakland University

Society in Bengal today is no longer the secluded society that Job Charnock fell in love with when he smoked his first hukkah under the shade of the banyan tree in the village of Sutanooti.[1] That little village has grown to be the megalopolis of Calcutta and toys with the problems of life, just as in Tokyo, New York or Rio de Janeiro. Bengali poets today are primarily residents of this urban area, and it would be futile to talk about any Bengali village-based poet, whether from the western or eastern part of Bengal, because, like Bengali refugees, the poets have migrated and are still migrating to this urban center for intellectual as well as economic reasons.

Thus, the question really is whether a Bengali writer of verse can continue to live the life of a "pure" poet in the old lyrical sense, or whether he must change his definition of poetry and replace the "lyric" with raw "life" in his poems. I think the situation in Bengal in this latter half of the century clearly answers the question. The Bengal poets have sided with and have chosen this "naked life" as their "ink" of poetry, an ink that is slightly reddish with human blood and misery. But they are not poets of horror by any means. The traditional lyricism is still there; the Vaishnav in every Bengali still raises its head from time to time, but, without any doubt, the time of the Shakta Tantric has arrived in Bengali poetry.[2] To borrow the words of our young American friends, "serenity" is out, "struggle" is in! We can prove this by quoting what uncertainly on the running escalator of contemporary life, and a "past-less poet," who ignores and deliberately eschews all that has happened before and is only involved with life today. Let us consider one of Jibanananda Das's poems, which I would call an example of "link" poetry:

> Emotion rises in one's heart --
> When that mountain-like cloud
> Brings along
> At midnight or end of night sky
> You,
> -- The dead one, that world has let go this night;
> The torn white clouds have departed in fear
> Like boys afraid -- the glowing of the stars in the sky has ended.
> Long period of time --
> Then you arrived, at the head of the field -- moon;
> Something that happened once -- then went out of hand
> Lost, ended. Even today with that taste
> You stand once more!

Fields all over the world have been weeded clean,
Grain fields have been farmed and farmed again;
The farmers have left;
Their stories of soil -- when all their tales of fields end
Still plenty remains to be told --
You know this, but does this world know it today!

("Kārtik māther cānd," Jibanānanda dasera shrestha kabitā, pp. 38-39)

"Still plenty remains to be told." Unfortunately Jibanananda died in 1954 in a streetcar accident before he could tell it. However, his conscious mind did not play hide-and-seek with his poetic mind; he knew it was coming. This poem proves my contention:

A strange gloom has come today in this world,
Those who are blind, today their eyes see the most;
Those who have no love in their hearts — no affection --
No compassionate vibration,
World stand still without their advice.
Those who still possess deep faith in humanity,
Those who even today accept as natural
The great truths or traditions,
Perhaps the arts or even devotion,
Food for vultures and jackals,
Today, that is what their hearts are!

("Advoot āndhār ek," ibid., p. 152)

Why this convern for the "world"? Why do not these sons of ancient Sutanooti remain content with their *"Sonār bāngla"* and their *"Mā gangā"*?[3] The reasons are simple enough: the world has shrunk since Job Charnock's day and Bengal has expanded since the days of Chandidas, and the time for the "past-less poets" has arrived.[4]

This time I shall write a poem and build a palace;
This time I shall write a poem and insist on possessing a
Pontiac car;
This time I shall write a poem and may not become the
president of the nation but
Will have my legs up for three feet of land --
After all, for many years this world owes to the
songs of shepherds!

I have written a poem and demand to drink scotch,
White Horse brand and two drumsticks of chicken,
Cooked in pure butter, not the rest of the meat;
I have written a poem and demand a thousand slave girls --
Or perhaps just one woman, but not in secret,
Someone whom I can openly ask for pardon, on the road,
Touching her thighs.

Whenever I stop at a level-crossing
I would like to hear the cannons roaring in my honor.
This time after I finish my poem
I am not giving up my demand.
I have been a street dog rolling on the dust of
someone's feet;
Squeezing blood from bones I still stand,
Asking alms from men, taking off humanity from my eyes --
Standing up from a feverish forehead, spit and cough,
For the sake of poetry.
Standing up from being a drunkard low-caste,
Burning my own body into ashes.
Standing up in my lonely room,
From those sounds of helpless regrets.
I stand here to wreak vengeance for writing poetry.

(Sunil Gangopadhaya, "*Ebār kabitā likhe*," *Āmi ki rakama bhabe bence achi*, p. 93)

This is a frustrated, angry poet! Poets, as a rule, do not get angry, but look out when they do! If one looks at today's society in Bengal, east or west, I think the anger is well justified. But in his anger and concern for self, has he lost sight of the "world"? I think not. The challenge here thrown is no longer a challenge to the society of Bengal; it has transgressed the borders of Bengal and has slapped the very face of humanity!

The time has therefore arrived in Bengali poetry where the choice has been made, and I cannot foresee any event that might occur in the near or distant future to make Bengali poets feel that theirs has been a wrong choice. I am not trying to be prophetic -- heaven forbid! Not after what happened to my poet-ancestor in the hands of modern American historians! I am just adding one and one and arriving at two!

One might fear that under the cruel pressure of social circumstances the Bengali poet will ultimately be so engrossed in his day-to-day problems that he will lose sight of his place in the world arena and that we might see another classic reenactment of the frog-in-the-well episode. The possibility of that happening seems to me to be negligible; primarily because, as I said before, this world of ours -- intellectually, at least -- has contracted and what happens on the left bank of the Seine, or, for that matter, the poetry reading in New York's Central Park, will inevitably find their ripples in Panchu Khansama's Lane in Calcutta.[5] This nearness, this oneness in thought and action among the poets of our world is a welcome phenomenon, a sure sign that, at least in poetry, the hemispheric division has disappeared.

With this disappearance of East and West as two entirely separate entities in the mind of the Bengali poet, there have appeared tendencies which link the problems of Bengal with those of other parts of the world. It has been said that these "internationalists" of Bengali poetry are Marxist in outlook.

Politics aside, they write excellent poetry. Bishnu Dey is a well-known poet who has continued his poetic endeavor behind his Marxist mask, and has succeeded extremely well.

> Untimely monsoon in the city: the blue throat of the sky
> is throttled,
> The firmament quivers even before the day breaks.
> In that rice factory, starved, helpless queues
> Somehow wrap their quinine-less bodies and shake,
> Hungry, with no knowledge at all;
> People of a beggar land, they carry the weight of our
> civilization
> With faith, they die to cater to our careers,
> We who have conquered death; they are like Dadhichi,[6]
> Today like beggars roam Bengal's alleyways.
> Perhaps the whole of Hindustan is under the shadow
> Of a worldwide eternal snake; by her serpentine lively
> speed
> She brings revolution in the Mainak mountain,
> Her saliva venom of eternity drips.
> Famed in poetry, the rain-sky of Bengal
> Is aglow in a vibrating future;
> That sunlight choking the blue
> In the roaring laughter of time,
> The waves of anger in history
> In Bengal, in Greece, in Rome, in France,
> In China, in Angkor, in Java.
>
> (*"1943 akāl barshā," Ekusha baisha*, p. 97)

It is evident now that in spite of all the political, social and economic turmoil that Bengal has passed through since the independence and partition days of 1947, the poets are still refusing to delimit their sight to their own immediate surroundings. They are involved with their environment, but they are more involved in wrenching this immediate environment out of Bengal's soil and replanting it in the world context.

But what about the person of the poet: his failures, his ambition, his love, his hate, and above all, his hope? We can quote one poet, the poet who calls himself a member of the "Hungry Generation," an angry group of poets in Calcutta who tried to read their poetry to the passing crowds on Chowringhee:

> Every day I wake up from my sleep early in the morning and
> think about hell, this coming August I shall step into my
> twenty-sixth year, I have been to several fearsome hells,
> who were my companions, what is the difference between the
> lips of a lover and a harlot, really, what am I thinking
> about, I do not think about these things but still I continue
> to think, a year back there were poets to whom I owed some-
> thing, now I cannot read their poems, I fiercely ignore and
> belittle them and stand on this platform searching for some-
> one, but do not see anybody's face, when I see a beautiful
> woman at times I feel like throwing up; in a kind of whitish

world, I did want my soul to return, let it alter its sights
in total soundlessness and touch a room and select its own
bed.

Today this early morning in the rainy month of July, I see
the traffic jammed up in College Street and no one can cross
the road, everybody with awful faces is walking up and down
by piercing the earth with sharp hooves, and me standing
naked a little away in this fearsome winter wind by the side
of the ugly river and burning ghat, in trouble, afraid and
helpless — I am not talking, I cannot talk I, I.

(Subo Acharya, "Image," from *Bloose*,
no. 1, p. 31)

Poets of Bengal today just cannot afford to sit back and enjoy a hallucinatory world of their own creation and their own interpretation. They have given the voice to the typhoon-flooded, politics-ridden, food-and-shelter starved millions of the two Bengals.

FOOTNOTES

1. Job Charnock was the first chief of the English settlement in Bengal, founded in 1690; Sutanooti was the largest of the three villages where Charnock arrived and founded his settlement. The other two were Govindapur and Kalikata.

2. The Vaishnav sect of Hinduism worships Vishnu; the basic philosophy of this cult is one of *bhakti*, or "love and faith." The Shakta Tantric sect worships Shiva and practices many esoteric self-disciplinary methods that may verge on violence.

3. "Golden Bengal," the first words of a very popular song compsed by Rabindranath Tagore and now the national anthem of Bangladesh; "Mother Ganges"; this feminine symbol is a particular favorite of the Bengali common man because the water of this river makes Bengal the fertile plain that it is.

4. Chandidas was a famous fifteenth-century Bengali poet; basically Vaishnav in outlook, his poetry is said to have influenced the *Sahaja* Movement in Bengali poetry. *Sahaja* poems were never written for literary reasons, but for a private group of initiates into the *Sahaja* faith. A literal translation of *sahaja* would be "inborn" or "spontaneous."

5. Name of a lane in Calcutta named after Panchu, who lived there and earned his living as a waiter.

6. A mythical sage of India who self-willed death so that Indra, the king of the gods, could use his bones to forge the weapon *Vajra*, a thunderbolt, in order to rid the world of the demons that were oppressing it.

INDIAN POETRY IN ENGLISH AND SOCIALIST REALISM

R. K. Kaushik

Delhi College

To Thomas Warton, the first real historian of English poetry, literary works were apparently little more than a treasury of costumes and customs, source books for the history of civilization. He argued that literature has "the peculiar merit of faithfully recording the features of the times, and of preserving the most picturesque and expressive representations of manners."[1]

Walter Allen, for another, sees poetry in the Middle Ages and in antiquity as one of the few outlets of expression for the great social and ecclesiastical issues of the time; and finds that an artist in those religious societies in which life was not atomized had a strictly defined purpose:

> The anonymous Old English poets who composed the 'Beowulf' epic and the 'Maldon' fragment knew none of the problems that face the poet today. Their place in society was as normal as that of the blacksmith; their work had direct social utility. They expressed, not an individual personality -- their relation to their work was utterly impersonal -- but the way of life of a community. Such problems as they had were those of any other craftsman, purely technical.[2]

Shelley also suggests, in a way, that art, especially poetry, is subordinate to life and dependent on the external world for its substance, its form, its energy and its relevance to human affairs. In his view the poet measures the circumference, and sounds the depth of human nature, with a comprehensive and all-penetrating spirit of the age:

> Poets are the hierophants of an unapprehended inspiration, the mirrors of the gigantic shadows which futurity casts upon the present; the words which express what they understand not; the trumphets which sing to battle, and feel not what they inspire; the influence which is moved not, but moves. Poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world.[3]

While Matthew Arnold states that as times go on and as other helps fail, the spirit of our race will find in poetry its consolation and stay, and will turn to it "to interpret life for us, to console us, to sustain us."[4]

Jean-Paul Sartre perceives a "subversive" element -- a shattering of illusion and exposure of hypocrisy -- even in literary compositions not consciously concerned with social problems, and where reality is aimed to be portrayed only objectively. He is emphatic in his attack on the "impossible" dream of giving an impartial picture of society and the human condition:

> If society sees itself and, in particular, sees itself as *seen*, there is by virtue of this very fact, a contesting of the established values of the regime. The writer presents it with its image, he calls upon it to assume it or to change itself . . . thus, the writer gives society a *guilty conscience;* he is thereby in a state of perpetual antagonism toward the conservative forces which are maintaining the balance he tends to upset.[5]

But is a markedly sociological approach to literature cultivated only by those writers who profess a specific social philosophy and political creed? Generally so. The Marxists, particularly, are interested in prophecy, monitorship and propaganda in a work of imagination. For, the leftist-oriented writer is expected to work out the formula of a "truthful, historically concrete representation of reality in its revolutionary development." He seizes the "purpose," discloses the social features of the human being in a historically "doomed" society, believes that in ceasing to be socially typical individuality loses its human typicalness; and, in the final reckoning, he functions only to speed the coming of Communism, of the earthly paradise where poverty, disease, sorrow and war shall find no place.

The "Progressive" tradition in poetry, as in fiction and drama, affirms the unity of morality, politics and art, and considers literature as a social institution, using as its medium language, which is in itself a social creation. Its upholders believe in the classical "maker," not in the romantic "possessed." Literature imitates life, it is declared, and it arises in close connection with particular social institutions, so much so that in primitive society one may even be unable to distinguish poetry from ritual, magic, work or play. Life, with its hopes, dreams and sorrows, offers myriad impressions, significant, trivial or fantastic; and whether these are evanescent or remain engraved with the sharpness of steel, nothing can prevent a creative work from emerging and getting shaped from this perpetual shower of immeasurable atoms. The poet, therefore, simply cannot avoid social responsibility unless he withdraws from the world of action and feeling into an ivory tower of escapist ideas after shutting his eyes and stopping his ears.

While defining the characteristic features of Socialist Realism, Gorky wrote:

> Socialist realism proclaims that life is action and creativity, whose aim is the unfettered development of man's most valuable individual abilities for his

> victory over the forces of Nature, for his health and longevity, for the great happiness of living on earth, which he, in conformity with the constant growth of his requirements, wishes to cultivate as the magnificent habitation of a mankind united in one family.[6]

But in an open letter to Messieurs J. Richard, Jules Claretié, René Viviani and other French journalists, Gorky proclaimed that, to him as a Socialist, "the love of a bourgeois" is profoundly offensive:

> We are enemies, and implacable enemies, I am certain. An honest worker is always an enemy of society, and even more an enemy of those who defend and justify greed and envy, these base pillars of the modern social organization.[7]

Communist literature functioning within the relative restriction of a cultural superstructure, which determines its formal values and interrelationship of its form with its content, naturally gets caught in the meshes of *Socialist Realism* and Party Spirit, or *partiinost*, and becomes a small wheel and a minor screw of the gigantic state machine. "Art belongs to the people," states Lenin, "and must penetrate with its deepest roots into the very midst of the labouring masses." He does not visualize any significant difference between the concern of a writer and that of a political activist:

> Literature must become permeated with Party Spirit. To counterbalance bourgeois morals, the bourgeois entrepreneurial and huckstering press, to counterbalance bourgeois literary careerism and individualism, 'noble anarchism', and the pursuit of profits -- the socialist proletariat must advance the principle of Party literature, must develop this principle, and must establish it in reality to the fullest degree possible. . . .[8]

A fundamental commitment to Socialist Realism, revolutionary dynamism, a prevision of mankind's enancipation and a studied attempt to resolve the problems of ideological education and to mold an integral Communist personality are discernible mostly in Indian poetry in the regional languages. Although, as Prabhakar Machwe puts it, "with not a few members of this school the shift from romanticism to socialist realism was not out of any inner compulsion but more or less, like the entire socialist movement in India, a mental superstructure -- more of an attitude, rather than a conversion."[9] It is particularly in the writing of a few poets from Bengal, Andhra Pradesh, Tamilnadu, Uttar Pradesh and Punjab that we find echoes of Maxim Gorky, Vladimir Mayakovsky, A. V. Lunacharsky, Dmitri Furmanov, Alexei Tolstoi, Ilya Ehrenburg, Henri Barbusse, Louis Aragon, Ralph Fox, the earlier Howard Fast and other theorists and practitioners of Socialist

Realism in letters. Evidently they, and other poets of their way of thinking, would wholeheartedly support Norris Houghton in his contention that

> What mourners for the lost freedom of expression in Soviet Russia fail to realize is that life as the Soviet artist sees it, is the realistic life of the Communist State. . . . Art as an escape is impossible in a state where people have nothing from which to escape. People who glory in the triumph of socialism have no desire to escape into an art which pays no attention to it. Art has been escapist only when society has lost its self-confidence.[10]

For example, Qazi Nazrul Islam, the fiery Bengali poet, composed "*Pralayollas*" (Welcome to Revolution) in 1922, and also gave vent to his pro-Soviet feelings in a typically flaming editorial he wrote for *Dhumketu* (Comet), a periodical he edited in collaboration with Muzaffar Ahmed, one of the founders of the Communist Party of India. His thesis was that

> The flood that has swept away into oblivion, that prison house of millions in Siberia . . . the roar of that flood is at your gate. Wake up brother, welcome the new mother.[11]

The theme of his poem "*Agni-vina*" is:

> Oh, why be afraid of destruction?
> Revolution brings the birth-pangs of the new
> The new age comes -- Its will tear asunder
> the forces of evil.

For, he asserts, there is hardly any other way of escape from this world of sin and greed wherein

> . . . the great are great today only by robbing the weak. The greater the robbery and theft, the cheating and exploitation. The higher the status in the modern world of nations! Palaces rise built with the congealed blood of subject peoples. Capitalists run their factories by destroying a million hearths. . . .
>
> ("Thieves and Robbers")

But his best known work thickly coated with a sincere love for leftist ideology and a profound understanding of the technique of Socialist Realism in content and method is "*Bidrohi*" (The Rebel) published in *Langal* (The Plough), the Bengal journal of the Peasants and Workers Party. Some stanzas

from this poem are quoted below:

Say, courageous one --
Say, high I hold my head!
The Himalayas look up at mine and humbly bow
their peaks.
Say: I pierce through the great sky of the universe,
I reach above the moon, the sun, the planets and the stars,
I break through the limits of earth and all the heavens
And even the seat of God almighty.
. . . . . .
Say, courageous one --
My head remains ever high!
I am every irrespressible, impudent and merciless:
I am the dancing Shiva of the Great Cataclysm,
I am cyclone, I am destruction, I am mortal terror.
I am the rebel, the mutinous child of the Goddess
of the Universe.
. . . . . .
I am the termination, the end of night!
I am son of the Queen of gods
With the moon in my hand and the
Sun on my brow,
One hand holds the curved bamboo flute
And the other the trumpet of war.
. . . . . .
I am the absent-mind of the indifferent,
the tearful sign in the widow's heart
and the lament of the despairing yearner,
I am the sorrow of deprivation in the heart
of the homeless wanderer living on the road,
I am the heart-pangs of the humiliated, and, again
the burning torment in the soul of love out-thrown!
I am the courageous, rebel eternal --
Alone, I tower over the universe with my head unbowed,
I am the ruthless axe that Parasuram carried
and will rid the world of its tribes of warriors and usher
calm, generous peace!
I am the plough on Balaram's shoulders and will uproot
with effortless ease
this world in chains, in the joy of creating it anew.
And I shall rest, battle-weary rebel, only on the day
when the wails of the oppressed shall not rend the air and sky
and the scimitar and the sword of the oppressor
shall not clang in the fierce area of battle --
That day my rebel self, weary with fighting, shall rest
appeased.

Sri Sri (Srirangam Srinivasa Rao) is another equally "committed" poet whose Telugu poem "*Mahaprasthanam*" (Forward, March) bears an unmistakable imprint of his Marxist zeal and "blood and thunder" philosophy:

The waves are rolling
The bells are tolling
The voice of another world is calling
Another, another, another world
Is rolling tolling calling on
Forward march
Oh onward forge
Ahead ahead let's always surge --
Our blood in floods
Shall drench all roads
We leap the deep and sweep all shores
Reshaping geography again
Remaking history again.
Nor deserts nor forests nor hills nor rivers
Our forward march shall halt or reverse
East and West and North and South
Eagles and lions and hounds of youth
Attack the turrets of humbug and hoax
The conservative the orthodox
Shall go to the wall shall come to the dock
Rotten marrowed
Senile time harrowed
Haggard laggards shall die on the spot.
. . . . . .
Storm the Bastille, Reaction's home,
And surge forward
Converge skyward
Lo, another world, a grander world
The banner of liberty has unfurled.
. . . . . .
See before us rise the glorious
Mankind's hope-lit spire of fire.
. . . . . .
Yonder yonder
Lo, the splendour
and the wonder
Of its faery fiery crown
And the red flag of its dawn
Like the ritual flame of time.

"Soil of Asia" by the Urdu poet, Ali Sardar Jafri, is in a much darker vein; but the muckraking element, though smacking of sentimentalism, is in

no way phony:

This is the soil of Asia, the womb of civilization,
the homeland of culture.
A crown of stars on her brow, the song of her anklets
of foam around her feet.
Her soil -- an ancient face.
. . . . . .
The fields of waving crops, cows, buffaloes
The sound of the pipe in the clear air
In the green fields.
. . . . . .
The flowing tresses of the date palms
The sound of tabors, the boom of drums
The laughter of the sea, the deep sighs of
the coconut palms.
. . . . . .
This is Asia, young, fresh and fertile,
Whose poor and penniless children the snakes of hunger bite.
Those lips which have never known milk since they left their
mother's breast,
Tongues which have never tasted wheaten bread.
. . . . . .
Bellies which know only hunger as their food.
These unique creatures
Are found only in Asia's paradise,
Creatures who after three hundred years of 'civilization'
are still 'animals.'
Where are you, you bearers of the light of culture?
The whole of Asia is an exhibition of your culture.
Lift up your eyes! Come near!
Look at this throng of lepers,
Look at this vomit of cholera, these swellings of the plague,
Here are blistered bodies, the fire of gonorrhea
With which imperialism's soldiers rewarded Asia's peoples.
. . . . . .

These backs which bear the scars of your lash,
These corpses hanging on the gallows,
These men held fast in jails,
These hearts riddled with bullets.
. . . . . .
This poverty, this night of ignorance, without moon or stars,
This hunger, this destitution, these hatreds and enmities,
These hanging goiters,
Screaming wounds,
Crawling bodies like insects,
Are telling the story of your capitalist 'culture.'

Send your painters and your sculptors!
Nowhere else in this age will you find such terrible faces.
. . . . . .
Tell them to adorn every museum with these terrible faces
As a lasting memorial of your mighty works!

Nikhileswar, a leading Marxist writer from Andhra Pradesh, finds emptiness sprawling before him like a corpse and islands of luxury ignoring the surrounding quagmires of grief:

. . . comfort pervades the earth
inside the pockets of someone
in some other's stinking bodies swollen.
. . . . . .
behind the emaciated extended hands countless
hungry faces dance.
indeed! goodness, beauty, morality are values which
are your necessity
they are needed by me and all but if goodness
fails to stand on its feet?
if beauty is sold like rubber balls?
if morality has lost its definition long time ago? where
are the values breathing?
what monasteries! what politics!
destroying the crashing values which are helpless and
for ever lost
cremating the cadaver of emptiness over the beds
of luxury's jumping grounds
for life's sake distribute violence again
and the spotless love that sprouts from violence.

("Violence," trans. Vijaya Kumar)

Jwalamukhi, the Telugu poet, renders a scalding interpretation of conditions obtaining in present-day India:

. . . he the vanquished, the left over
the sucked, the poor, the chased
the victim and the exploited one
the Bodhi Tree failed to give a fistful of shade to him
from Gandhi's way a spoonful of sauce wouldn't come
shelter in treatises on ethics was a silly dream
the theory of *Karma* -- a slave it made him.
he fainted in a stroke, hit by religious hot gales
was spat out disgustingly at holy shrines' gates
amusedly kicked around a road called independence
impatiently scoffed at in a thieves' park termed democracy.
. . . . . .

the "Supreme-Goddess" of justice
embedded inside a lovely glass palace
couldn't be reached by the *common man.*

in Delhi -- "the junction of this reign" -- can be seen, he continues:

robbers with paunches, he-men with hydroceles
priests with *panganamas*, and political jackals
gentlemen bandicoots with overflowing beards
women with whiskers and whiskerless eunuchs
cowards wearing bangles, and *gama pahilwans*
sex kittens roaming around brandishing their boobs
lovers and street deities, actors, the city's true Gods
khaddar-caps and sons of guns called leaders
rascals and bastards mosque's kaffirs and
goondas from *gurudwar*
and the sinners of the church peace lovers and newsmongers.
. . . . . .

the paunches that were fattened on burglary,
the hips and bottoms that matured in political prostitution,
the breasts seen in the bras of blackmail
the calf that fattened on stolen strength
the things that swelled over contracts
the cheeks that blew out in borrowed laughs
the stinking lips of corruption, wet after drinking power
the hidden parts of their anatomy,
were anointed in the daily stinking business of politics.

("Defeat's Insurrection," trans. Vijaya Kumar)

What Nagarjun, the Maithili poet, remembers of a wayside railway station is not the name of the place but "skeletons trying to eke out sympathy in small drops":

Infant skeletons, young skeletons,
Old skeletons,
Skeletons of old women,
Skeletons of young women,
Skeletons of girls.
. . . . . .
Dry-breasted skeletons,
Skeletons with burnt embroyos
At the direction of the
Siding of a good train
On both the sides
With cupped hands, with handfuls
Skeletons picking up dust with grain.

("Skeletons," trans. Prabhakar Machwe)

The Kashmiri poet Dinanath Nadim knows that "one who played the happy moth to the flame of new resolves, the beacon in the path of his fellow-fighters" is dead, yet he wonders:

Comrade --
Why does not our song sound in your ears?
Tired? Why lie you down when the journey's not done?
Wherefore should you slumber when our work is just begun?
Watered with your blood, won't you see the goden bloom?
Won't you wait for a new time's dawn that'll be seen?
Is it right for the architect of the future to assume
Death, my comrade --
My comrade-in-arms?
. . . . . .
You are no more -- but what of that?
Can fire forever slumber?

("Comrade-in-Arms," trans. T. N. Raina)

The Punjabi poetess Amrita Pritam's one-time flirtation with Soviet thinking in the sphere of politics and literature is reflected in, among others, her poem on North Vietnam:

Someone came in the middle of the night
To give a hand at the grindstone of grief;
People saw a lamp walking
On a footpath engulfed in darkness.
Today even the winds
Asked the land of Viet Nam,
Who wiped a tear
From the cheek of history?
In the early hours of the morning
The earth dreamed a verdant dream;
Who rose to the fields of heaven
And sowed the Sun?
. . . . . .
Who is this prince we hear about
Who is this yogi; his fame is spreading far?
He picked out the thorns
From life's fair feet.

("Ho Chi Minh," trans. Surjit Singh Dulai)

But she is basically a romantic-realist and the disillusionment with "proletarian dictatorship" was not long in the coming when she discovered, to her chagrin, that:

Socialism --
a temple of the human race
man's values equal to a brick's

which may be set
where the temple needs it
or the contractor wishes.
its three great sins!
feeling pain
tender thought
individual freedom
one who frees himself of these
and sells for gold his soul
can please the goddess of power.

("And He Wept," trans. Mahendra Kulasrestha)

The major Indian poets in English -- P. Lal, V. K. Gokak, Sarojini Naidu, Toru Dutt, Armando Menezes, Aurobindo Ghose, Nissim Ezekiel, Adi K. Sett, Harindranath Chattopadhyaya, Nilima Devi, Kamala Das, H. D. Sethna, Baldoon Dhingra, A. K. Ramanujan, Monika Varma, Keshav Malik, J. Krishnamurti, Suresh Kohli, V. N. Bhushan, and others -- contribute towards the rise of a new ethic without a partisan espousal of radical movements, give expression to their country's spiritual strength (nostalgic at times and wrathful at others), cherish ideals of beauty, love, metaphysics, religion and morality, go in for a search for eternity behind phenomena and love of infinities and develop a unique and personal vision in their perpetual quest for inner reality; but at the same time they rarely elude their social environment. An active, forceful and heartfelt humanism, compassion for Man who lives in an ugly, unjust world of violence, deceit, suppression and exploitation -- and an aching conscience -- very often impart to their work a design and a meaning.

Even those among them whose horizon is particularly filled with the enormous figure of the times, who use words as social dynamite, pose a challenge to time-worn codes and hoary conventions, subject society to strong condemnation, make of poetry simply a recording apparatus without tampering with reality and aspire to become beacons in the darkness, guiding the shaping of men's aims and material ends as moral agents, generally, consider political commitment to be an assault on their integrity. They shun trademarks and labels, display a catholic, tolerant, urbane and flexible disposition, subscribe to no exclusive dogma, no one scheme of conception, cultivate the heart and the brain and a creative conscience, and distil the complex truth from their intricate apprehension of reality. Their art makes its own way and by its own means, and they seem to have taken to heart, so to say, Edwin Seaver's warning against the infantile disorder of "Socialist Realism" -- its schematicism, dogmatism, sterility and substitution of measurement for judgement:

> In the field of creative work -- schematicism takes the form of offering ideas or slogans without benefit of the creative act; without, that is, clothing such ideas and slogans in flesh and blood and giving them an emotional and human propulsion so that they come to life by their own right, and not by fiat of the author's. . . .[12]

As James T. Farrell puts it, works free from "revolutionary sentimentalism" and "mechanical Marxism" are apt to possess "a human worth and a carry-over power which endow them with a relatively inherent persistence-value after they have been divorced from the material conditions and the society out of which they have been created. . . ."[13]

In poetry, especially, the two notes of pleasure and utility should combine well, if the relative is to be imbued with meaning and the particular is to become fraught with universality. Evidently, that is possible only when the emotion (or commitment) is worked into the texture and dialectic of the poem, and when the ideas seem to turn into symbols, even myths.

Having deeply imbibed the liberal aspect of Indian tradition, V. K. Gokak, one of the many accomplished men of letters and a poet of fine sensibility and clear vision, portrays the social and political realities in India without indulging in any political rhetoric or extraterritorial allegiance:

> This is my India,
> My motherland,
> This is the country of my song,
> The home of my being
> And the land of my becoming.
> . . . . . .
> My be, millions of my mother's children
> wander, half-naked with hunger and thirst.
> My be, illiterate,
> They multiply a hundredfold
> The ignorance that grips the land.
> But I would be a partner in their misery
> And they will be co-partners in my knowledge.
> This is my India,
> My own Motherland.
>
> ("My India")

And:

> My children! Do not forget!
> Let not the joy of deliverance elate you.
> Forget not your sisters and brothers
> Sweltering in the heat
> And hungering in the cold holes called their homes.
> Your foundations might crumble before their grief-warm sighs
> And a keen, resentful glance bring down the edifice.
> Their agonised cry might shatter your cloud-capped towers,
> A bruised heart may raise its hood
> And an empty stomach bellow forth ire and flame.
> Even through the music of anklet bells may be heard
> The crack of doom.
> . . . . . .

Exterminate misery from the land
And enthrone equality and equanimity of vision;
Then will the sapling of freedom you have planted today
Yield freedom its meaning and blossom forth into light.

("15th August, 1947")

Of course, his humanitarian ideals can make him as angry, bitter and impatient as any zealot believer in Socialist Realism when society refuses to change its spots or seek a cure of its ailments:

An ape fingering a ruby he chanced by,
Man has laid waste our kind and buried us
In the dung-heap of Time, dead to the world.
Nautch-girls to the *Shudras*, courtesans
To soldiers, *Devadasis* to the brahmin
And to the farmer -- acres for ploughing.
. . . . . .
Princes who set up stables for their steeds
Built harems for their queens and spoke to them
As to young parrots caged in burnished gold.
. . . . . .

The Pandavas divided Draupadi
As children would a guava. Helen of Troy
And Padmini -- their beauty was their doom.
. . . . . .
And the gods too were crimson with this guilt.
Indra raped Ahalya, old Gautam's wife.
The world knows Brahma's incest.
. . . . . .
Gods and men like demons undid us
Deeming that Woman's body was Woman entire
And toyed with it, covering themselves with dust
They flung away the creeper of the soul
That burgeoned in her earth and made her sing
Her ruin down the corridors of Time.

("A Maiden on Womanhood")

Rabindranath Tagore is equally critical of the hide-bound ritual of religion and propounds a realistic philosophy of humanism:

Leave this chanting and singing and telling
of beads! Whom dost thou worship in this
lonely dark corner of a temple with doors
all shut? Open thine eyes and see thy God
is not before thee!
He is there where the tiller is tilling the hard

ground and where the path-maker is breaking
stones. He is with them in sun and in shower,
and his garment is covered with dust. Put off
thy holy mantle and even like him come
down on the dusty soil!
. . . . . .
Come out of thy mediations and leave aside
thy flowers and incense! What harm is
there if they clothes become tattered and
stained? Meet him and stand by him in toil
and in sweat of thy brow.

("Leave This Chanting")

He does not feel like blaming anybody in particular for what the world has come to:

Bow down your head.
It is your sin and mine.
The ulcer grows in the heart of God for ages --
The cowardice of the weak,
The arrogance of the strong,
The cruel greed of the greedy,
The rancour of the wronged,
The pride of race, and the insult to the divinity in Man --
These have burst at last,
And scour earth and sea with the breath of destruction.

(from *A Flight of Swans*, Poem 37)

In some of his poems M. Krishnamurti pierces, as if with a lancet, the caste system, which has, over the ages, developed like a cancerous tumor and deeply corroded the Hindu religious and social set-up:

We have branded him outcaste, untouchable,
We have smeared God's holy image with shame,
We that proffer worship to unheeding stones
With chanting and swinging of camphor-flame!
We look on his body with loathing and scorn,
Regarding his touch more soiling than mire;
Yet he it is who purges and renders up pure,
Ay, cleanses us even as water or fire.
Patient and forgiving like as the Earth,
With his burthen of sorrow he walks his way --
As the Earth that bore us and feeds us still,
Though we spurn and defile her everyday.
God pity our souls and forgive us our crime,
That have trodden like filth on a fellow-folk;
God pity our souls and revoke his doom
That condemned us to bear the stranger's yoke.

("The Harijan")

Sarojini Naidu, a fanciful builder of beautiful dreams, a melodist of high order and the firebrand of political life in India, only rarely turned her attention as a poet, to political themes. In only one of her poems is she a political activist, in spite of the picturesque and romantic element so typical of her:

> O young through all thy immemorial years!
> Rise, Mother, rise, regenerate from thy gloom,
> And, like a bride high-mated with the spheres,
> Beget new glories from thine ageless womb!
> . . . . . .
> Thy future calls thee with a manifold sound
> To crescent honours, splendours, victories vast;
> Waken, O slumbering Mother, and be crowned,
> Who once wert empress of the sovereign Past.
>
> ("To India")

Humayun Kabir sings of revolution -- social, economic, political -- but his inspiration flows from Gandhi and not Marx or Lenin:

> Across vast spaces and vast times he strode
> buoyed upon the hopes of an ancient race
> achieving courage out of dark despair.
> Like a huge serpent resting coil on coil
> slept the vast country in involuted sloth,
> but a breath of life stirs every vein.
> . . . . . .
> A puny figure strides upon the scene
> of vast and elemental suffering: Strides
> against a background where slow death
> paints in dull phantasmagoral grey
> the end of all endeavour, hope and faith.
> . . . . . .
> The static, dead and slothful continent
> thrills to a new song of hope, of forward move.
> The momentum gathers, the masses shake
> and strain and quiver for the onward march
> from slow decaying death to resplendent life.
> . . . . . .
> Launches India's resistless caravan
> into adventures new, a perilous path
> where out of life's substance must be carved
> new values, new direction, order new.
>
> ("Mahatma")

Shankar Mokashi-Punekar is also all praise for the creed of non-violence enunciated by Gandhi:

Within the ash of dead despair,
A spark still lived, however slight.
Hope's neglected sombre glare,
To luminous flame did soon ignite,
Reward of our peaceful fight,
Born was a nation debonair.
. . . . . .
In the supreme Vic-regal chair
A man in Dhoti at last did 'light
. . . . . .
Oh! the eyeful glorious!

("The Globe and Granny")

To Harindranath Chattopadhyaya, life is one long sentence served on us by ourselves shut in by callous prison walls of stone. He endeavors to unmask the mystery of life and comes up with this answer:

If ravage, rapine, resistance
Did not exist
And with convulsive twist
And treachery not pack
This concave of existence;
If, side by side with Grace, black
Savagery did not wrench the back
Of God and make it bleed;
If the vulture did not, in abnormal greed,
Upon the helpless chicken pounce
And there had been an absence of all strife,
Would not the peace that then should reign, denounce
The high significance of life?

("Life's Secret")

He points out that the Maker of Beauty has thought it, more or less, His strange celestial duty to fashion ugliness and to move upon His endless travel through glaring opposites:

My mystery ever encloses
Black nights with silver morns:
How could I have made the roses
If I hadn't conceived of thorns?
How could I have written my story
Through all these aeons of years,
If I hadn't wed sorrow to glory,
Bright laughter to sullen tears?

It is only in "A Call to Poets" that he leaves behind "the old selfish singing," decides to "walk above the ways of little passion" and to fashion great music out of "another grief and love" in the manner of Socialist Realists:

> The grief of human hearts that break,
> The love of liberation.
> . . . . . .
> The lives of millions burn and bleed
> And millions starve and linger:
> Along with bread and hope they need
> Each bold and daring singer
> Whose songs shall give them strength to stand
> Through fiery tests which face them.
> . . . . . .
> A song can be a mighty thing
> And make the sword a coward;
> When poets of the people sing
> Triumph is redly-flowered.
> From every breast that once was struck
> With helpless moan and sorrow
> A people's poet knows to pluck
> The triumph of to-morrow!
>
> ("Contraries")

Keshav Malik craves a boon -- respite from the bleeding of thoughts, the bells that move to unrest, the voices of hosts lost among the flames of the too frequent hells, the deafening war spells, public gloom or personal blight; and he looks forward to the dawning of a day uneclipsed by dark shades, faded roses and the pale smoke of fate. But as a dreamer who turns his ears off in clean disdain if the world's gross faults lie too heavy on his heart, he does not find despair worth nursing:

> Rest your arms
> Upon my green hair
> O sick O sorrowing O suffering
> O millions; trust your starving
> Limbs to my care,
> O hear my heart sing
> And turn your eyes
> Towards the sky's ring.
> O dying derided infants
> O quick-limbed dreams
> Come sleep upon my rhythms,
> And trust your conquests and defeats
> Within my blue-green-gold-vision.
>
> ("Upon My Green Hair")

R. M. Challa has little doubt that human passion ever remains the same and Man would continue to live in dross, bear the burden of endless evil and prey on mutual hate:

> You have endeavoured to create a new world --
> oh, not a world from Nowhere, not with an
> intention of destroying this our true world --
> but a new world of dying but live man
> in place of this old world of live dead men.
> . . . . . .
> And oh, how many sterile, static fossils,
> how much Reaction, stopped you now and then!
> What endless circles of primeval gross ills
> tried to encircle you in their congestion!
> . . . . . .
> But why strive after thus reforming others
> against their will? No, that is not the question:
> for where can goodness thrive when badness bothers
> it on all sides? . . . The poor are poor; rich wretches
> have sold their souls to their own wretched riches.

Subho Tagore, deeply moved by the disintegrating condition of contemporary society, turned a "Progressivist" and radical. A scion of the wealthy Jorasanko Tagore family, he disposed of all his property and ancestral estate in the 1930s because "he was an enemy of the capitalist system." But in his work as an artist and a poet revolt and liberty coexist with affirmation and ecstasy:

> Imperialist?
> Fascist?
> She is neither.
> Communist never she is.
> Yet you may find in her
> That regal pomp of the pagan princess,
> That salt sweat of the soviet peasants
> And that firmness of a fascist dictator.
> Sometimes even like the blue Danube
> Her every artery surcharged with upsurging blood:
> The deep blood of high aristocracy
> Self-delighted she swings
> In the cradles of ideal to ideal.
> And from the hands of the bourgeois
> To the poverty-smitten working class
> She passes on
> . . . . . .

But one day, when one by one
Imperialism, Communism
Facism,
Nay, all the 'isms' of politics
Will decay and disappear --
Even then she will remain alive!
Alive with the fullness of life and laughter
. . . . . .
There she stands alone —
She -- my Poem,
As a part of eternity.

("My Poem")

In sharp contrast to the upholders of Socialist Realism for whom *Vox populi, vox Dei* ("The voice of the people is the voice of God") or conversely *Populus vult decipi, ergo decipiatur* ("The public wishes to be fooled; therefore, let it be fooled"), he is unashamedly misanthropical as well as manifestly benevolent:

People be damned --
Don't talk before me
About the people
I despise them.
Traitor to their Saviour
From the very birth;
They are the ancient culprits
Who once had crowned the Christ
With the crown of thorns.
Through ages they have stabbed
Many a seeker of truth
Who gave them solace,
Many an innocent worshipper of Beauty
Who brought boon to their broken hearts;
The people killed them
And killed them outright
Without food,
Without sympathy,
Without affection.
These people? I know them very well.
They are the traditional criminals,
They are the ruthless barbarians,
The only living hindrances
To the upliftment of mankind.
. . . . . .

Yet have I forgiven you
Oh foolish people!
As you are ignorant and insensible
I have forgiven all your faults.
Though crucified by
Your vile comments,
For your good
I have dedicated my life and soul,
All the poems I have composed,
All the pictures I have painted.
And with the garland of your contempt
On my neck
I shall compose
Songs,
Pictures,
Poems,
Which will bring to your heart
Ever increasing joy
And supreme consciousness.

("The Mob")

M. Gopalakrishna Adiga exhorts people to stop rotting in wrangling and recrimination and help build an abode of joy, apparently after the manner of the Bolsheviks:

We will build a new land.
. . . . . .
Trenches of caste and creed all round
And impregnable fortresses confound;
Like a giant dead habit rules
And defies us to battle.
. . . . . .
We shall clamber up the forts upon our dead,
Death and agony shall be the cradle of the new land
We shall not fear or falter,
For heroes never waver.
. . . . . .
Look yonder! Upon the waves of harmony,
To the time of symphony of equal joy and agony,
Holding out promise of equal opportunities
Comes the land of our cherished dreams.

("We Will Build")

P.R. Kaikini hates all that is false and oppressive and desires a holocaust so that a new and better world may come into existence. He exposes the whole tribe of hypocrites who live in palatial houses in luxury, use high-sounding words for the common man's amelioration and affirm a hundred times

that the same God created both the rich and the poor:

As you race
The machine of your new Rolls-Royce
Your ten thousand employees
Toiling in your mill from dawn to dusk
Stop in their work
To salute your passing phantom
To ha-ha you, you primrose of power and pride!
. . . . . .
In the evening, you drive in your sports-car
To the club to play bridge, billiards or tennis
And regain your slackened vitality.
Dusk descends on the distracted world
And casts into gloom a million souls
Who have no resting-places and
No eating-houses to go to,
Whose unflinching eyes
Flinch from looking at well-lighted houses and hotels,
Who with a lost hope of slumber
Sink into the night's oblivion.

("The Millionaire")

Mary Erulkar's gaze encompasses cornlands dying away like singing bonfires, deserted hamlets, famine-stricken children and perpetual gloom:

. . . the women walk where the winds of hunger
Lament in the black harps of their hair;
And when the prayer-pierced darkness kneels upon the land
The women walk home to their weeping doors
With poverty like a lantern in their hands.
And in strangers' hearths where the gods of gold sing
While the smell of new bread swings from the windows,
All night the women's dreams cry like mice;
And in the moon-hung orchards of sleep the children laugh
Before the apple-red and hungry mornings rise.

("The Third Continent")

In Leela Dharmaraj's ears also hollow voices echo in pain:

From the muddy gutter
. . . . . .

Towards the car the little ones come running
Their bare skinny bodies are dust-stained.
Their hair is tousled, their pants
Held up by a piece of string.

Some mothers raise loud cries
And demand the milk. Others
With the babies at their breasts, too listless
To move, beg with their eyes.
In shamefaced guilt, the dark,
Thatched huts bend low. Near its walls
Rises a hill of dirt. Flies form a buzzing
Smoke. A child silences a stray dog's bark.
. . . . . .
Crushed ones -- who forgot their poverty
And squalor in meaningless labour.
From their misery there is no release.

("Slum Silhouette")

Even Manjeri Isvaran, who despised Gandhi's social philosophy and political strategy (the *swadeshī* movement, *carka* economy, and calls for civil disobedience against the British rulers of India), did not care to subscribe, on the rebound, to Marxism and Socialist Realism:

India, mother India!
I must be drunk or maudlin to call you mother,
and vaunt my filial love to you.
India, my noble mother that was,
and mother of millions such as me,
and millions more kicking in her womb --
she died young,
she died a dazzling death,
with vermillion on her brow!
with flowers in her hair!
. . . . . .

India! land of mongrels multicoloured,
who turn the Imbecile Wheel and spin,
and twist threads for their own strangulation,
cackling with dead voices for democracy,
for freedom to fashion their own sweet laws,
of what use is democracy to you?

Someone, far over the waters, years ago,
ate his bread and drank his wine in peace,
ay, as pleased as Punch and talking aloud
he was making the world safe for democracy.
Only he made people hate each other more,
and showed how to cut quicker each other's throats.
India! of what use is democracy to you?
To shave the heads of your women?
. . . . . .
To drag your gods to the market place?

("To India: A Question")

He was no "brown sahib," however, taking sides with The Establishment, but a man of the masses, perceptive and principled, who did not fail to notice that the 1947 "transfer of power" and India's independence brought about little change in the lot of the common man:

> Sing, brothers and sisters, sing,
> for the millennium is come
> to the music of pipe and drum.
> . . . . . .
> Waste not your time in worshipping the gods
> who are a legion;
> O, they have been ousted by pimps and bawds
> in every region.
> . . . . . .
> there's only one god,
> the crowning fraud --
> the god of the black market,
> running racket on racket.
>
> ("The Black God")

And:

> Shed O shed
> onion tears for the common man;
> he is so nice,
> he is so brave,
> the common man the common man;
> rile up the papers with rhetoric,
> shake the platforms thunder-tongued,
> in sympathy for the common man.
> . . . . . .
> he is patient as a plaster saint
> the common man the common man.
>
> ("The Common Man")

M. Govindan, likewise, perceives in post-independence India catacombs of cowards and cutthroats and love and hate, the little brats, playing hide-and-seek in the accumulated ash-dunes of burnt-out dreams:

> Deity of Democracy is a bronze idol
> Picked up from the backyard of [the] British Museum
> Purified in the holy waters of Triveni
> By a priestly gentry chanting chanting
> *Vox populi vox Dei* in chaste Hindi.
> . . . . . .

Even the revolution is a three-act burlesque
Enacted by the post-freedom power-clique.
Act One: A clarionet call: "Arise ye the wretched
To erect the citadel of Socialist State".
The other half is in praise of Free Enterprise.
Lights on Act Two. Another announcement:
"Our Hero escaped with the make-up on
From the green room to the nuptial."
Act Three: angry crowd led by a dozen rowdies howl:
"Hey boys, if there is no revolution, let us
At least have a counter-revolution!
Why not? Arise ye the wretched...."

("Who Will Demolish the Death-Trap")

Freedom was patricide, he recalls:

. . . when the British left
Hindus and Muslims
Butchered each other.
Rosary and sacred thread
Rose as fiery flames.
. . . . . .
Partition of the motherland
The penultimate patriotic act.
Ishwar Allah *tere nam*
No more nonsense, shut up
Ishwar lives in Hindustan
Generalissimo Allah, ha, ha
He commands the Holy Land.

("A Fable")

Most Indians, he concedes, wear tridents of tradition, vertical or horizontal, on their furrowed foreheads, but he knows, as a true patriot, that despair will only ferment the flowers of the mind into malignant tumors:

We are the cut roots
Hardened under age-old deposits
Crying for chlorophyll.
We are the dead bones sucking
Our own acrid marrow.
. . . . . .
If the past has any depth
Let it cohabit with the present
As the Earth Goddess did
With the Lord of Preservation.
. . . . . .

Moth or mammoth, death or decay,
This is my dust, this is my destiny.
Bitter yet how sweet
Is native myth
In death,
In life,
Pro-creative.

("Dilemma of Being Indian")

Nissim Ezekiel's is again an authentic voice unmotivated by that deliberate exploitation of the cheap response which characterizes Socialist Realism:

Always in the sun's eye,
Here among the beggars,
Hawkers, pavement sleepers,
Hutmen dwellers, slums
Dead souls of men and gods,
Burnt-out mothers, frightened
Virgins, wasted child
And tortured animals,
All in noisy silence
Suffering the place and time.

("In India")

And the same holds true of G. S. Sharatchandra:

I know a hunger that has no eyes
But only hands that extend like claws
Into garbage cans digging for rotten
Food licking the banana leaves
Before the cows get to them,
I know the children that share
A dog's steal growl and fight
like dog prevail like dog,
I know mothers who would gratefully
Watch while you screw the daughter
For the price of one meal.
. . . . . .
I know a nation where death
Is a blessing to the dead and living.

("Matrudesh")

Deb Kumar Das, in "To the Three Civil Rights Workers Who Died in Mississi,pi," expresses sorrow, yet disapproves of the political beliefs which prompted them to clash with the police and meet a violent end:

For them, no flowers. No unwanted cnadles
They made their own
Death: shaping a hatred to arrow

Accuracy -- giving it
Targets: their own bland souls: but more,
The knife, its cutting edge; the bolt in orbit
Its destination. For them no tragic sighs.
They found their welcome:
The shells of broken houses, a skeleton
Once a church: the cry, the almost-voice
Stored deep inside a wilderness.
. . . . . .
Forgive them; for they found no road: were lost.
The absurd travel, not their journey's end,
Made them, still young, quite blind to violent cost.

His "The Newly Dying," though written against the back-drop of the Vietnam War, is again free from any dogmatism:

The newly dying feel no reasoned pain.
For them, the viper's stealthy kiss in grass:
The stab of wooden foot spears: or the flowering
Grenade: as unexpected as a Christmas.
For them, the world's dark knowledge. In fighting
No war for no country and no multitude
The act of death is itself an affirmation:
An answer to the question no one asked.

And "Riot in Harlem" also:

It was perhaps the best wide-open death
There under the white sun, where
The pistol-crack echoed: you could hardly
Have confused it with
Wind: rock: curtain's random flap
Window pane blown open by storm.
. . . . . .
Black-blooded from open dark-alley sores
Caught by the surprise of angled street corners
Moleblind at first to bright lights the pavements
Clean while glitter: the crown jewel calm the
Exploding at last in looking for ways to escape
Another walled-in Berlin but finding no tangible
Barbed-wire or barricades. . . .

But this mood of intellectual detachment, if not cynical apathy, is discarded by Das in "The Exile's Testament" -- and the poet's personal involvement in the subject matter results in a realistic portrayal of the socio-economic problems facing his countrymen without, of course, the Socialist Realist's belief in Soviet Russia as the ultimate haven:

My India had too many clammy hands.
Too many leper faiths, or purblind lies
Too many anxious excuses for everything

Except the freedom of the firefly's search.
Peasant eyes answered by Brahmin blandness:
Truth repeated two hundred thousand times
Until its words were only incantation.
. . . . . .
Wherever I go, there goes India's darkness:
Its clockwork nightmare: unquestioning death.
No sky I travel under can be empty
Of brooding vultures' tentative shadow.
. . . . . .
This living exile void, not traitor bliss,
Is my gift to what I call my country.
There shall be no other Eldorado
To play the mirage to my desert travel.

"Indo-Anglian poetry, like the rest of modern Indian poetry," avers V. K. Gokak,

> is Indian first and everything else afterwards. It has voiced the aspirations, the joys and sorrow of the Indian people. It has been sensitive to the changes in the national climate and striven increasingly to express the soul of India, the personality which distinguishes her from other nations. At the same time, its constant endeavour is to delineate the essential humanity and universality which makes the whole world her kith and kin. . . .[14]

But as the poets communicating in the English language overwhelmingly display a haughty repugnance towards crass political commentaries, sociological survey reports and Marxist-Leninist slack passages, their writing is as palpable and valuable as the breath of life in a human form. Naturally, the art of poetry as they practice it is, in the words of P. Lal, "as exacting and painstaking as the carving of an original design in invory . . . a delicate choreographic pattern within a state of balanced tension produced in a refined sensibility."[15]

FOOTNOTES

1. Thomas Warton, *History of English Poetry* (London, 1774), I, 1.

2. Walter Allen, ed., *Writers on Writing* (London, 1958), p. 7.

3. P. B. Shelley, "A Defence of Poetry" in *English Critical Texts*, ed. D. J. Enright and Ernst De Chickera (London, 1962), p. 255.

4. Matthew Arnold, "The Study of Poetry," in *English Critical Texts*, p. 260.

5. Jean-Paul Sartre, *What Is Literature?*, trans. B. Frechtman (New York, 1949), p. 81.

6. Maxim Gorky, *On Literature* (Moscow, 1961), p. 264.

7. Maxim Gorky, *Articles and Pamphlets* (Moscow, 1950), p. 144.

8. V. I. Lenin, *Sochineniia* (Moscow, 1947), X, 27.

9. Prabhakar Machwe, "Influence of Socialist Thought on Hindi Literature," for Seminar on Socialism in India, 1919-1939: A Retrospect, New Delhi, 28-30 November 1968.

10. Norris Houghton, *Moscow Rehearsals* (New York, 1936), p. 263.

11. Qazi Nasrul Islam, ed., *Dhumketu* (Comet), 20 December 1922.

12. Edwin Seaver, "Caesar or Nothing," *The New Masses*, 5 March 1935.

13. James T. Farrell, *A Note on Literary Criticism* (New York, 1936), p. 46.

14. V. K. Gokak, ed., Introduction, *The Golden Treasury of Indo-Anglian Poetry, 1828-1965* (New Delhi, 1970), p. xxv.

15. P. Lal, ed., Introduction, *Modern Indian Poetry in English: An Anthology and a Credo* (Calcutta, 1969), p. vii.

SOCIALIST REALISM AND THE INDIAN NOVEL IN ENGLISH

R. K. Kaushik

Delhi College

Bertrand Russell has vividly described what he considers to be the Soviet deviation from Marxism:

> Marxists, like other progressives, advocated democracy, free speech, free press and the rest of the Liberal political apparatus. The Soviet Government, when it seized power, reverted to the teaching of the Catholic Church in its great days: that it is the business of authority to propagate Truth, both by positive teaching and by the suppression of all rival doctrines. This involved of course, the establishment of an undemocratic dictatorship, depending for its stability upon the Red Army. . . .[1]

As the Soviets seemed to have not only retained the materialism and commercialism of the West, but also added to it a ruthless political tyranny and total intellectual regimentation, their politico-economic system was utterly repugnant to the basic ideals of the Indian national movement, especially to those of non-violence, democracy, economic and social justice. Mahatma Gandhi whose deep sympathy for the underdog and a passion for equality between man and man -- a religio-ethical humanism — made immediate and lasting impact on the Indian imagination clearly indicated that "India did not want Bolshevism. The people are too peaceful to stand anarchy." The idea that a bloody revolution is the only, or always effective, cure of social ills evidently seemed to Gandhi no better than the old superstition of medieval medicine that bloodletting is the only sovereign remedy for body ailments. "It is my firm conviction," he declared,

> that if the state suppressed capitalism by violence it will be caught in the coils of violence itself and fail to develop nonviolence at any time. The state represents violence in a concentrated and organized form. The individual has a soul, but as the state is a soulless machine, it can never be weaned from the violence to which it owes its very existence. Hence, I prefer the doctrine of trusteeship. . . .[2]

He gives credit to the Communists for discovering the dialectics of economics, but deduces that their mistake lay in making it an all-embracing phenomenon:

> In their zeal to concentrate on economic forces they [the Communists] condemned all non-economic, and their social order was nothing peculiar than the acquisitive capitalism. Such social order might have succeeded in extirpating capitalism but strangled the man in whose name it was established. . . .[3]

Jawaharlal Nehru seemingly admired both Marx and Lenin; and Marxism had lightened up many a dark corner of his mind; but his preference was for Democratic Socialism. Writing in 1938, he stated:

> I am certainly a socialist in the sense that I believe in socialist theory and method of approach. I am not a Communist chiefly because I resist the Communist tendency to treat Communism as a holy doctrine, and I do not like being told what to think and what to do. . . . I feel also that there is too much violence associated with the Communist method and this produces untoward results as in Russia in recent years. The ends cannot be separated from the means. . . .[4]

To M. N. Roy, who was the first link between the Communist International and nascent Indian Communism (but happened later to discard institutionalized Communism as "a soul-killing orthodoxy"), Gandhi was a "petty-bourgeois reactionary" and his cult of non-violence "which compelled the Congress to waive the right of using all means for attaining Swaraj" nothing less than "conformity with imperialist violence. . . ."[5] Marxism and Gandhism could not obviously supplement each other. For "the song of songs of Marxism" contains the idea of violent revolution as a panacea for all social and political evils; the proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. "If we seek out the origins of the present-day worship of violence as a solution of problems," remarks C. E. Merriam, "we find them in the Marxian theory, in the doctrines of Nietzsche and Sorel, in the following the practice of the Nazis and the Fascists. . . ."[6]

No wonder that "the force of spirit" advocated by Gandhi made no impact on the Indian Marxists who failed to visualize the radical perspective of his philosophy by reason of their dogmatic bigotry. According to Rahul Sankrityayana: "Gandhism is a double-edged shield of capitalism. It avails field of work for Indian Capitalists from foreign governments -- from foreign capitalists; it wishes to make laborers adopted sons of capitalists, and peasants ever grateful to landlords. . . ."[7] And R. Palme Dutt contemptuously describes Gandhi as "This Jonah of revolution, this general of unbroken disasters, who could unleash just enough for the mass movement to drive successful bargain for the *bourgeoisie* and at the same time save India from revolution. . . ."[8]

A large number of Indian writers assiduously explore their national identity and demand of themselves an honest and perceptive projection of contemporary social, economic, political and moral conflicts. Naturally, fiction in English, like that in the regional languages, mostly gives voice to the feeble protest, dull anguish, battered faith and atrophied wills of the victims of Kubera (the Indian pot-bellied, smirking Mammon), as well as of Indra (a vagarish Thor and Ceres rolled into one). Much of it, by reason of this deep involvement, dwells on a general sense of society's malaise and conveys especially the theme of poverty and hunger in a melancholy and somber tone. But this stark realism does not necessarily stipulate any distinctive political ideology; at least there is no regimentation and the novelists, by and large, display a freedom of vision and motivation and are spared the withering touch of conformity. Manifestly, Karl Marx takes second place to M. K. Gandhi and the majority of the better known writers like R. K. Narayan, Nayantara Sahgal, R. Prawer Jhabvala, Manohar Malgonkar, Bhabani Bhattacharya, Kamala Markandaya, Anand Lall, Anita Desai, G. V. Desani and others, either shun political themes altogether, or

give the impression of a marked predilection for Mahatma Gandhi's philosophy in the Indian context.

Nirad Chaudhuri very rightly expects his fellow countrymen to accept hunger stink, disease, squalor and untidiness as an integral part of the Indian scene:

> It is a country which exacts robustness or inflicts neurosis. . . . I declare every day that a man who cannot endure dirt, dust, stench, noise, ugliness, disorder, heat and cold has no right to live in India. I would say that no man can be regarded as a fit citizen of India until he has conquered squeamishness to the point of being indifferent to the presence of fifty lepers in various stages of decomposition within a hundred yards, or not minding the sight of ubiquitous human excreta everywhere even in a big city. . . .[9]

Kamala Markandaya's *Nectar in a Sieve* is a tragic tale of the pathetic peasant life in India, and of the impotence of human endeavor in the face of natural calamities and a relentless, heavy-handed destiny. Evolved with unimpeachable authenticity and profound sensitivity, but without an iota of any overt or implied political ideology, the theme splices into a single chord: *poverty*, constant companion of the tenant-farmer; *hunger*, ever at hand to jog his elbow should he relax; *despair*, ready to engulf him should he falter; and *fear*, of a dark future in this world and the next, always gnawing at the inner recesses of his body and soul. The fury of a thunder storm adds to an already brimful cup of the villagers' sorrow:

> Uprooted trees sprawled their branches in ghastly fashion over streets and houses, flattening them and the bodies of men and women indiscriminately. Sticks and stones lay scattered wildly in angry confusion . . . the workers' huts . . . had been demolished. The thatch had been ripped from some, where others stood there was now only a heap of mud with their owners' possessions studding them in a kind of pitiless decoration. . . . There was water everywhere, the gutters were overflowing into the streets. Dead dogs, cats and rats cluttered the roadside, or floated starkly on the waters with blown distended bellies. People were moving about amid this destruction, picking out a rag here, a bundle there, hugging those things that they thought to be theirs, moving haltingly and with a kind of despair about them. . . .[10]

Drought conditions are worse still and harder to bear with withered crops, shrivelled hopes and frayed tempers:

> Day after day the pitiless sun blazed down scorching whatever still struggled to grow and baking the earth hard until at last it split and great irregular fissures gaped in the land. Plants died and the grasses rotted, cattle and sheep crept to the river

> that was no more and perished there for lack of water, lizards and squirrels lay prone and grasping in the blistering sunlight. . . .[11]

And when the last grain, in the house, had been eaten by her family Rukmini narrates her epic of woe:

> Thereafter we fed on whatever we could find: the soft ripe fruit of the prickly pear; a sweet potato or two, blackened and half-rotten, thrown away by some more prosperous hand; sometimes a crab that Nathan [her husband] managed to catch near the river. Early and late my sons roamed the countryside, returning with a few bamboo shoots, a stick of sugarcane left in some deserted field, or a piece of coconut picked from the gutter in the town. For these they must have ranged widely, for other farmers and their families, in like plight to ourselves, were also out searching for food; and for every edible plant or root there was a struggle -- a desperate competition that made enemies of friends and put an end to humanity. . . .[12]

A tannery set up in the village spreads like weeds in an untended garden and strangles whatever life grows in its way:

> It had changed the face of [the] village beyond recognition and altered the lives of its inhabitants in a myriad ways. Some -- a few -- had been raised up; many others cast down, lost in its clutches. And because it grew and flourished it got the power that money brings, so that to attempt to withstand it was like trying to stop the onward rush of the great juggernaut. . . .[13]

But when, with tears blinding their eyes and the taste of salt getting on their tongues, broken down under the grief of leaving their lands and home behind, the villagers migrate to the city they discover, to their horror, that their hopes were but of the stuff of dreams, wraith-like. For, the streets already swarmed with children who

> . . . looked as if they had never eaten a full meal in their lives, with their ribs thrust out and bellies full blown like drums with wind and emptiness; . . . and the running sores many of them had upon their bodies were clogged with mud where blood and pus had exuded. But they themselves were forgetful of their pains -- or patient with them as the bullocks had been -- and played naked and merry in the sun. . . . [Yet] however much they played and were children, still their faces were scored with the knowledge and cares that children should not have. . . .[14]

In *So Many Hungers*, Bhabani Bhattacharya, depicts the man-made food famine in Bengal, which in 1943-44 took a toll of two million men, women and children, using his medium like barbs poisoned with bitter indignation and with censure of "the colossus of alien authority, cold and inhuman, and its fawning puppets," who had practiced economic banditry on such a staggering scale. While ten million peasants groan in hunger, rice they had raised with their toil either moves into the godowns of hoarders, and profiteers, or out of Bengal to enable the Allied Forces to march, their bellies filled, against the Axis Powers:

> Corruption had grown like an epidemic. Money had become a mad hunger. Flowing in great swollen streams, it made private lakes for the rich, who grew vastly richer. The poor grew proportionately poorer. Never in the land's history had the process that made the rich richer, the poor poorer, gained such ruthless intensity. . . .[15]

But the peasants' hands are manacled with their antique moral traditions:

> They had risen in anger against the tyrants, the robbers of freedom who had swept the people's leaders into prison even without a pretence of trial. But they would not rise in revolt that their stomachs could be soothed -- a selfish personal end. They would fight and die over a moral issue. But hunger was their fate, an expiation of the sins of past lives. . . . The tyrants, rice robbers, were safe from peril because of the peasants' tradition. . . .[16]

Dadu, a tall, straight figure in white homespun, who lives among peasants and fisher-folk, tells his grandson Rahoul Basu that he is proud of his "people" whose faith in human values has not been destroyed by "centuries of hunger, brute hardship and strain":

> On his petty income the landed peasant can have just enough of his own rice to eat, no reserve for lean days. And the *Kisans* -- they must always be hungry save for a spell of two or three months in the year, when they earn meals and a wage for field work. The hundred million *Kisans* of India must always be hungry. It is a rare gracious day to have the stomach full. . . . You see, Rahoul, the true meaning of the spinning wheel, the symbol of our national movement? The masses of India with their less-than-two-annas-a-day can work the wheel and produce loin cloths to cover their nakedness. . . .[17]

And Rahoul also feels "the voice of India echo in his blood throb" -- and joins the "Quit India" movement in response to a call given by Mahatma Gandhi. But freedom from subjection is not an end in itself, he realizes:

> It is the instrument of a new struggle and of a new life . . . free from hunger and insecurity, fear and exploitation . . . the starting point for a vast striving to make a saner order of life for all the people, to secure for one-fifth of humanity a human destiny. . . .[18]

A straggler on the eastern seaboard stumbles, falls down and never rises again; he dies for lack of food. No one then felt that he was a premonition, a symbolic shape of things to come:

> Other men sank down and died. Then women. Finally, children. Husbands and sons tried to shield with their blood and bones the dear ones at home, and failed. All were decaying together. . . . Authority took little heed. A passing phenomenon. A situation over-dramatized by the Press. The dying ones who lay huddled on moonsoon-wet pavements were refused admission in hospitals -- the regulations did not provide for people who were undiseased, only shrivelling up because of an empty stomach. The empty stomach was due to no blight of Nature, no failure of crops . . . the harvest had been fair. The belated law against hoarding was a dead letter -- never was it lifted against the rich food-profiteers, henchmen of the Excellencies and Honorables. . . .[19]

A young woman crouches at the bend of an embankment, digging the soft mud with her hands, a tiny child by her side. She picks up the bare-limbed baby boy, rocking him in her arms as he whimpers faintly, places him in the trench, folds his reed like arms over the bony chest and pushes the eyelids down as though to put him to sleep, and mumbles:

> Poor godling, so hurt with hunger . . . he has no throat to cry. If he sleeps a little! Where is sleep? He is hurt and hurt all the time with his hunger. In his cool earth-bed he can close his eyes, sleep. . . . In my arms he only knows pain, he dies slowly, slowly, slowly. . . .[20]

As girls of six sell for eight silver rupees, and a young woman's body for "three silver pieces and some smaller bits" in the countryside, brothels become big business in the metropolis and other big towns. And in the service lanes of Calcutta

> Destitutes and dogs . . . fought often for possession of the rich city's ten thousand rubbish heaps in which scraps of rotting food lay buried. It was not every time that the destitutes won, routing the dogs in the streets and the dog within themselves. . . .[21]

Suruchi, a member of the Indian delegation to a Women's Peace Congress in Moscow -- in Bhabani Bhattacharya's *Shadow from Ladakh*, a novel on the Gandi vs. Mao theme -- is not impressed by the fiery oration of Mrs. Tung Pao from Peking and does not agree with her that "peace, ever lasting peace, cannot be won without war, a war to end all wars." But her strong protest, particularly with reference to the 1962 Sino-Indian border conflict, is brushed aside by another Chinese woman who implies that India has sold its newly-won freedom to the

imperialist powers and has become "a shameless lackey of Anglo-American capitalism":

> We in China are determined to set you free from the iron chains of imperialism. We will give you real freedom. We will help you to overthrow your slave government, crush your bourgeoisie, set up the rule of the people. . . . We in China will turn liberated India into a new heaven. . . . We love your people . . . inspired by the Gandhian ideal of non-violence. . . . The people of India will be our dear friends and brothers for the next ten thousand years.[22]

India was all warmth for China's new way of life, even though it was not her way, for she, inspired by Gandhism, still believed in many paths leading to the goal of human happiness. On the eve of India's independence, Gandhi had undertaken a mission of peace to East Bengal, the hostile land where madness raged:

> . . . the outburst of genocide in East Bengal dyed freedom itself with the color of fresh blood. While politicians fitted themselves into the robes of Authority, Gandhiji announced his peace plan; he would go to East Bengal and travel on foot over the countryside where brutality had left its crimson trail. He, a Hindu, would face millions of the anti-Hindu, alone, armed only with moral force. . . .[23]

In China also, under the leadership of Mao Tse-tung, a long-suffering nation had at last reached the end of its travel and come to its tryst with destiny:

> The new rulers gave the country peace after the anguish of age-long chaos, and they redistributed the land to the starved masses of peasants and they gave the people a passionate urge for a new life to be built with their hands and hearts.[24]

But while Mao thinks: "The whole world can be remodelled only with the gun. War can be abolished only through war. To get rid of the gun, we must first grasp it in our hands,"[25] Gandhi never disbelieved in the godliness of human nature or in the possibility of a permanent peace through mutual trust, sacrifice and persuasion: "If even one nation were unconditionally to perform the supreme act of renunciation, many of us would see in our life time visible peace established on earth. . . ."[26]

And it is through Bireshwar that Bhattacharya speaks out his own mind:

> Wishful thinking could not help us in the past years. We cannot alter facts by the simple device of ignoring them. . . . Trotsky has come to Peking. That way, you may say, it isn't a simple repetition of the old-world imperialism. But even Trotsky wouldn't approve of Mao Tse-tung; the ultra-chauvinism, the naked self-interest that's at the back of China's expansionism. They have great faith in the power of propaganda to turn a black lie into truth. . . .[27]

"America is as alien a world from ours, and the people as unlike ours as people can be," concedes Nayantara Sahgal, but affirms that "it is the treasure-house of art and science today -- and the country of the future":

> We have a hauteur in this country [India] towards money. It's a good thing to remember that a man with food in his stomach and money in the bank is not necessarily one without a conscience. The great renaissances in art and science, the greatest achievements in thought, even here in India, have taken place during peaks of prosperity. The prosperous commercial centers are the ones with the museums and art galleries, the ones that finance research. . . .[28]

A well-reasoned commentary on Communism, against the backdrop of the first few weeks of World War II, appears in her *Prison and Chocolate Cake*:

> Communism means working together in common and sharing benefits in common, with equal justice to all. This is a beautiful idea. It aims at producing a classless society. That is to say where there are no rich and high and mighty who have all the good things of the world and more on the one hand, and, on the other, a vast mass of ill-clad, ill-fed, ill-housed humanity. . . . This is the theory of Communism. But between theory and practice there is a world of difference. You know the Sermon on the Mount, and what a Christian should be like, and how he should act towards Christians. Now watch what the Christian English, French and Germans, and others are doing, and how different their conduct is from what it should be. And so it is with the Communists. The Nazi and Communist Governments are tearing up the body of sorely stricken Poland bravely fighting against overwhelming odds.[29]

Daughter of Mrs. Vijay Lakshmi Pandit and niece of the late Jawaharlal Nehru, she genuinely believes that in politics the Gandhian era "had meant freedom from fear, the head held high, the indomitable will in the emaciated body of India. . . . No stealth, no furtiveness, and therefore no shame. Every act proudly performed in the sunlight. . . ."[30] -- and that

> . . . millions of people would have been ordinary folk, living their humdrum lives unperturbed but for him. He [Gandhi] had come to disturb them profoundly, to jolt them out of indifference, to awaken them to each other's suffering, and in so doing to make them reach for the stars. . . .[31]

But unlike Mahatma Gandhi, she does not care to idealize village life and seeks an integration of the archaic rural culture with the machine civilization of the twentieth century to bolster up the industrial-cum-agrarian revolutionary process in economically backward India. Gyan Singh, the Chief Minister of Punjab State, who could "almost measure his own progress from the village in terms of the splendor of the [Bhakra] dam" -- a massive tangible

achievement, a source of inexhaustible power -- "did not understand the stupidity of linking the peasant with the worker":

> The men who had done it had obviously not been in either category themselves. Could you link the Stone Age with the twentieth century? You could only shackle progress that way. The peasant, anyone knew, does not change. Leave him on his land, and leave the land to him. Let him feel secure on it. Land was not man's invention and the laws concerning it belonged to the blood and marrow of human beings, to conventions older than laws, that could not be tampered with. Leave the land alone, he had always felt, and change the cities. Build them upside down or sideways or backwards, whichever way made them prosper. Give them industries. Then the peasant would go to them for jobs and change come over the countryside. . . .[32]

The central figure in Raja Rao's *Kanthapura* is Moorthy -- "one of these Gandhi-men who say there is neither caste nor clan nor family" and he visits "the Potter's quarter and the Weaver's quarter and even the Pariah quarter" to collect donations for a new kind of *harikatha* (religious discourse) in the village:

> In the great Heavens [narrates Jayaramachar, the *harikatha*-man] Brahman, the Self-created One, was lying on his serpent, when the sage Valmiki entered, announced by two doorkeepers. 'Oh learned sire, what brings you into this distant world?' asked Brahma . . . 'O God of Gods!' [replied Valmiki] 'I have come to bring you sinister news. Far down on the Earth you chose as your chief daughter Bharatha, the goddess of wisdom and well-being. You gave her the sage-loved Himalayas in the north and the seven surging seas to the south, and you gave her the Ganges to meditate on and the pure Cauvery to drink in. You gave her the riches of gold and of diamonds, and you gave her kings such as the world has never seen! . . . But, O Brahma! You who sent us the Prince propagators of the Holy Law and Sages that smote the darkness of Ignorance, you have forgotten us so long that men have come from across the seas and the oceans . . . to bind us and to whip us, to make our women die milkless and our men die ignorant. O Brahma! deign to send us one of your gods so that he may incarnate on Earth and bring light and plenty to your enslaved daughter. . . .[33]

And so Brahma sent Mohan Das [Karam Chand Gandhi] to free his beloved daughter, India, from the British yoke and the *avatar*, the saint, goes from village to village "to slay the serpent of the foriegn rule":

> Fight, says he, but harm no soul. Love all, says he. Hindu, Mohomedan, Christian or Pariah (low-caste),

> for all are equal before God. Don't be attached to riches, says he, for riches create attachment, and attachment hides the face of Truth. Truth must you tell, he says, for Truth is God, and verily, it is the only God I know. And he says too, spin every day. Spin and weave every day, for our Mother is in tattered weeds and a poor mother needs clothes to cover her sores. If you spin, he says, the money that goes to the Red-man will stay within your country and the Mother can feed the foodless and the milkless and the clothless. . . .[34]

The *satyagrahi* ("freedom fighter") Moorthy is hopeful that "there will not always be pariahs and poverty" in his motherland:

> . . . things must change. . . . Jawaharlal will change it. You know Jawaharlal is like a Bharatha to the Mahatma and he, too, is for non-violence and he, too, is a *Satyagrahi*, but he says in Swaraj [emancipation] there shall be neither the rich nor the poor. And he calls himself an 'equal-distributionist'. . . .[35]

Rangamma, one of the few well-informed and educated women in *Kanthapura*, speaks to the village folk about Soviet Russia:

> . . . the great country across the mountains, the country beyond Kabul and Bukhara and Lahore, the country of the hammer and sickle . . . a great country, ten times as big as, say, Mysore, and there in that country were women who worked like men, night and day; men and women who worked night and day, and when they felt tired, they went and spent their holiday in a palace -- no money for the railway, no money for the palace . . . when the children were still young they were given milk by the Government, and when they were grown up they were sent free to school, and when they grew older still they went to the Universities free too, and when they were still more grown-up, they got a job and they got a home to live in and they took a wife to live with and they had many children and lived on happily ever after . . . there all men are equal -- every one equal to every other -- and there were neither the rich nor the poor. . . .[36]

"The whole of the Gangetic plain," muses K. R. Ramaswamy, the novelist's alter-ego, in Raja Rao's *The Serpent and the Rope*,

> is one song of saintly sorrow, as though Truth began where sorrow was accepted, and India began where Truth was acknowledged. So sorrow is our river, sorrow our earth, but the green of our trees and the white of our mountains is the affirmation that Truth is possible. . . .[37]

"India is," to him, "like a juice that one is supposed to drink to conquer a kingdom or to reach the deathless -- juice of rare jasmine or golden myrobalan, brought from the nether world by a hero or dark mermaid. . . ."[38] He explains to Savithri, his friend, who used to have in Cambridge "dubious and interminable discussion with her communist comrades, liking their sincerity, their disinterestedness, their cleanliness":

> Pugs, Madame, are a bourgeois conception, and would not therefore be allowed in the fatherland of socialism. You can say "psh-psh-psh" (like our peasants call back dogs of India) to most people in the Soviet Land -- anyway they carry labels, chains and municipal hygiene certificates, allow their tails to be cut or have muzzles put on their beakers -- so dogs are not allowed. . . .[39]

At another place in the novel Raja Rao makes a comparative study of Marxism and Nazism:

> Communism is the acceptance of life, the justification of life: Nazism the denial of life, its destroyer. . . . When the Germans entered France, there were still officers who made the *Le Silence de la Mer* possible: when the Russians entered Berlin they raped every woman they could. The one ran to the fulfilment of life, the other glorified himself by denial. Mephistopheles was a solipsist. Lenin was a Saint Francis turned inquisitor. . . . After all Stalin was an usurper, a Cesarevitch who *succeeded* Rasputin. . . .[40]

On the other hand, there are quite a few Indian writers who admire some characteristics of Marxist thought -- particularly its role in improving the social climate of a country -- but are too much the individualists to be labelled anything but social-realists or humanists. For example, Amrita Pritam, one of the best known writers in the Punjabi language, whose revolutionary romanticism is often mistaken for militant Marxism, appreciates some facets of life in Soviet Russia, but protests against the lack of individual freedom which she noticed there:

> The system is very good for the common people. They have good food, work, and I have written some articles about it. But they lack individuality. My poems particularly appreciated there were those of an enthusiastic nature. Joy and enthusiasm are parts of life, but not all of life. When an individual suffers and writes something about it, it is not heard there, nor appreciated if heard. I read some poems, delicate ones about individual sorrow; those were not appreciated as much as those about the welfare of the masses. . . .[41]

Iqbal, the People's Party worker in Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan*, tells the headman of village Manomajra warmly:

> If you want freedom to mean something for you -- the peasants and workers -- you have to get together

> and fight. Get the *bania* Congress government out. Get rid of princes and the landlords and freedom will mean for you just what you think it should. More land, more buffaloes, no debts. . . .[42]

"It was fatuous to suggest," thinks Iqbal,

> that the bourgeois revolution could be turned into a proletarian one. The stage had not arrived. The proletariat was indifferent to political freedom, so all that could be done was to divert the kill and grab instinct from communal channel and turn it against the propertied class.

But he carries on heroically that

> . . . we have to get together and rise. We have nothing to lose but these chains. . . .
>
> If you really believe that things are rotten that your first duty is to destroy -- to wipe the slate clean -- then you should not turn green at small acts of destruction. Your duty is to connive with those who make the conflagration, not to turn a moral hose-pipe on them -- to create such a mighty chaos that all that is rotten like selfishness, intolerance, greed, falsehood, sycophancy, is drowned. In blood, if necessary. . . .[43]

Iqbal is not only Khushwant Singh's eyes and ears in the novel but also his stalking horse:

> The whole country was like an over crowded room. What could you expect when the population went up by six every minute -- five millions every year! It made all planning in industry or agriculture a mockery. Why not spend the same amount of effort in checking the increase in population? But how could you, in the land of the Kama Sutra, the home of phallic worship and the son cult. . . .[44]

And:

> In a country which had accepted caste distinctions for many centuries, inequality had become an inborn mental concept. If caste was abolished by legislation, it came up in other forms of class distinction. In thoroughly westernised circles like that of the civil servants in the government secretariat in Delhi, places for parking cars were marked according to seniority, and central entrances to offices were reserved for higher officials. Lavatories were graded according to rank and labelled *senior officers, junior officers, clerks and stenographers* and *other ranks*. . . .[45]

Buta Singh, in Khushwant Singh's *I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale*, is facing a crisis of confidence:

> Gandhi had made loyalty to the British appear like disloyalty to one's own country and traditions. Larger and larger number of Indians had begun to see Gandhi's point of view. People like Buta Singh who had been proud of being servants of His Brittanic Majesty were made to feel apologetic and even ashamed of themselves. Loyalty became synonymous with servility, respect for English officers synonymous with sycophancy. . . .[46]

But his son, Sher Singh, "who was always somewhat noncommital on political topics when talking to his father," has little doubt that few Indians were really concerned with the future of their country -- "The communists are worried about what will happen to Russia, and others think only of what will happen to Britain." Addressing the Students Volunteer Corps he makes only a puerile attempt at mockery of the Communists:

> Comrades, we meet at a crucial time. The enemy [referring to Japanese occupation of Burma and threat to India during World War II] is at our gates. Comrades, we not only have the enemy at our doorstep, we have enemies within our own house. Those who sacrifice the interests of the motherland for foreign countries are our enemy No. 1. They have been rightly named as the *Kaumnashts* [pun on the word "Communist"] - destroyers of the race. . . .[47]

The Maharaja of Begwad, in Manohar Malgandar's *The Princes*, has nothing but contempt for "the nationalists, goondas led by traders and lawyers" -- and supports the British regime against the political agitators, the Congressites as well as the terrorists:

> Mind you, I am no friend of the British. . . . I hate them far worse than Gandhi can do. He was only thrown out of a railway carriage. My grandfather was certified by them -- certified mad and deported just because he refused to kowtow to the Resident. . . . But I would prefer the British to the Gandhi-ites any day, so that the integrity of our state is preserved for all times. . . . And if it can be achieved only through British bayonets, let us keep British bayonets here by all means. . . .[48]

He lives in a world of his own -- the world of princely India remote from the twentieth century, encrusted with taboos and clinging with pathetic desperation to a rosy intoxicating picture of make-believe, half-truths and legends -- and cannot see the writing on the wall. But to his son, Abhayraj, it was all clear that "the new garb of power was the white cap and the loose knee-length shirt of the Indian National Congress," and that

> an unbridgeable gulf separated him from the wave of nationalism sweeping in the country and erupting in the states. . . . Almost overnight there had sprung

> up all over . . . political organizations calling themselves Praja-mandals, or people's assemblies, and they had begun a virulent campaign of slander and falsehood against the rulers. . . .[49]

Prince Abhayraj's "first direct contact with the quivering poverty of India" was through Kanakchand, a cobbler's son, when he showed him "what he had brought with him for his midday meal - a single black *roti* smeared with a mess of oil and chillies and a whole raw onion. . . ."[50] And growing up this Kanakchand became the Prajamandal chief in the state, with a mind warped and stunted by the iniquities of the circumstances in which he had been brought up:

> I want revenge. I want to wash away the insult of poverty . . . the shame of untouchability . . . the shame of my mother not being allowed to draw water from the well because it would pollute the supply, of Brahmins washing themselves if my father's shadow fell on them, of temples being barred to us, of tea-shops refusing to serve unless I took my own cup and plate. . . .[51]

But ostensibly, he professes to stand "for the people, the down-trodden people, for their birthright": "We are giving the people a new deal, just as we promised. . . . The people have come into their own -- the people; you, I, all of us. We are the masters. Where are the masters of yesterday; I ask you, where are they?"[52]

Among those whose political orientation and partisanship in the class war have neither been vague nor short-lived are Mulk Raj Anand and Khwaja Ahmad Abbas. They are not only vitriolic and peppery, but are also handicapped by a spirit which is too heavily grounded in preconceived ideas and prejudices to rise to the infinite patterns of Indian thought and behavior, and reduce themselves to the level of purveyors of sociological data which, in spite of its apparent solidity of documentation and profusion of local color, rings somewhat false and pedantic. Such Socialist-oriented novelists in English, and others of their guild in the regional languages, do not fight shy of a revolutionary tendency in their creative and critical writing and are motivated by a fanatic zeal to help bring about "the final clearing of debris of imperialism and reaction."

Many of them are closely associated with the Indian Progressive Writers' Association (PWA), which, inspired and nurtured by the Writers' International, held its first General Session at Lucknow on 10 April, 1936. Among other things it was solemnly resolved that it is the duty of all progressive writers "to discourage the reactionary and revivalist tendency of Indian literature to escape from real life into baseless spiritualism and ideality":

> It is the object of our Association to rescue literature and other arts from the conservative classes in whose hands they have been degenerating so long, to bring the arts into the closest touch with the people; and to make them the vital organs which will register the actualities of life, as well as lead us to the future we envisage. We believe

> that the new literature of India must deal with the basic problems of our existence today -- the problems of hunger and poverty, social backwardness and political subjections. . . .[53]

At a more recent Conference, Sajjad Zaheer, the General Secretary of the PWA, revealed that Communists and writers with Communist sympathies furthered an important section of the Progressive Writers' Movement, and that it furthered the political objectives of the Communist Party of India:

> The Communists can be accused of many things, but surely not since Marx and Engels wrote the Communist Manifesto, can they be charged with hiding their real aim: namely the overthrow of the capitalist system and the ending of exploitation of man by man. A Communist, when he becomes a writer, surely would not be worth his salt if he abandoned or even compromised his basic social ideal. . . .[54]

Mulk Raj Anand, co-founder of the Indian Progressive Writers' Association with Sajjad Zaheer, minces no words while condemning the "authoritarians who conform to the views of the establishment whether it is a church or state" and who fail to reflect

> . . . the agonies of the suppressed, the underprivileged and the bereft, who have so far been kept back by the historical process of slavery implicit in the feudal, racialist and imperialist periods, the hangovers of which still survive in the modern world. . . .[55]

It seems to him that there exists a deep connection between imaginative writing and the human condition and that a serious writer

> . . . can not evade contact with the people and their problems or isolate himself from the society of which he is a part or hide from the inequalities, injustices and deprivations of the political and social systems which are devoid of integrity. . . .[56]

He makes his fictional writing and essays an adjunct to politics and a device for instruction and edification of "the class which is no longer a class," and a crusading spirit permeates especially his novels. On account of their love for "the private-property-cum-profit system," he ruefully states, people in India do not care to evolve a "more equitable civilization." The new conquerors -- who threaten to "divest the citizen of all honor and dignity," isolate each individual by "buying off some to exalt others," squeeze out "the very corpuscles of red blood," collect the loot and assimilate the produce of the forests, plains and hills --

> . . . are not emperors, nor kings, nor even the foolish old wise men. They are the bulls and bears on the Stock Exchange, they are bankers big businessmen, they are a number of robbers turned princes, they are landlords, industrialists, rulers, statesmen, of varying colors and shades of opinion. . . .[57]

The necessity of revolution in this country, he suggests, lies in the yawning gulf that separates the proletariat from the money-bags:

> . . . on the one hand the vast masses, prisoners of so many chains, bearing the physical signs of grief, of lassitude, even of death, and on the other hand, the supercilious rich wrapped up in their self-assurance and complacency never once questioning the ideals of glory and power and wealth. . . .[58]

Anand seems to be concerned chiefly with a naturalistic depiction of the passively rotting mass -- the social scum that, hounded from pillar to post, is reduced to mendicancy and semi-starvation:

> . . . whole crowds of women huddled together, the whites of their eyes glued in empty stares from hollows deep like those in unburnt skulls on the cremation ground. . . . They bent over the fleshless skeletons of their children, looking, just looking, without moving their heads, as if they were waiting for something, they knew not what. They had bowls or pieces of colored rags spread out for alms, but they were not begging. For they seemed to weak to lift their heads and accost the passers-by with their stares. . . .[59]

And:

> . . . [Munoo] looked in the direction from which the smell oozed. A soft breath, half moan, half sigh, was all he could hear, and the movement of a corpse flinging off its blanket. He looked the other way. There was another coolie turning on his side restlessly and muttering something. He withdrew his glance. Presently he became conscious of a bare body rolling in anguish and slapping itself on the knees to the accompaniment of foul curses. . . . There were corpses and corpses all along the pavement. If the half-dead are company he was not all alone. But he felt a dread steal through his . . . the uncanny fear of bodies in abeyance whose souls might suddenly do anything, begin to snore, open their blood-shot eyes for a second, grunt, groan, moan or lie still in a ghastly, absolute stillness. . . .[60]

Count Rampal Singh in Anand's *The Sword and the Sickle* parodies Mahatma Gandhi's voice: "The spinning wheel! the spinning wheel! . . . I say unto you! . . . the spinning wheel is the cure of all our ills in this destructive machine age. . . ." then adds the acid comments:

> I am quite sure he [Gandhi] knows that we are the blind bullocks who could be yoked to go round the oil mill. Don't you see that he is an ingenious Gujerati *bania*, with the shop-keeper's sure instinct for making money. There is a sound basis for his

> spinning-wheel idea from the point of view of the townsmen. . . .[61]

It is with "a provocative grimace" that Lal Singh, in *The Village Trilogy*, enumerates Gandhi's physical characteristics:

> His right hand is much longer than his left, his eyes dip inwards like a crook's and are blind to what he doesn't want to see; his belly is knotted up with constipated entrails . . . with his large ears, his sunken cheeks and his pointed chin, only he lacks the horns on the head . . . his legs point gravewards, and yet he seems no nearer death. Some men can live too long. . . .[62]

After the departure of the British Paramount Power in August 1947 -- reckons Anand in *Private Life of an Indian Prince* -- treachery, betrayal and nepotism became the order of the day and

> . . . the Princes had to accept the suzerainty of the bourgeois national government of Delhi, and let the Praja Mandal leaders rule over their states, themselves retaining their money and being further reinforced in their dignities and powers by the revival of ancient Hindu titles. . . . The neat little captions under which this change was wrought were "Democracy", "Freedom" and "Responsible Government", the ever ready stock-in-trade of the money-power state. . . .[63]

Vyacheslav Polonsky's description of the dry, grim, effective, practical Communist is so very close to the image Mulk Raj Anand shaped of his bearers of the red banner:

> He destroys illiteracy, eradicates religion, banishes the dirt of ages, and uproots the advocates of private property. He loves work. He hates phrases. He is a soldier of the revolution. . . . He identifies himself with society. His aim is to understand the world in order to remould it. His personal responses are secondary. Social interests dominate over the egotistic. Indeed his social and individual interests coincide. His life is broad and embraces a universe. . . . He is a realist. The unearthly, the un-material does not exist for him. He abhors idealism, mysticism and religion. He prefers dialectic materialism to metaphysics. . . .[64]

Anand meticulously portrays his leftist intellectuals and Communist Party workers as champions of the underprivileged. Puran Singh Bhagat, in *The Big Heart*, is an itinerant poet and scholar and helps pour "the old wine of the Sikh ideal of service and devotion into the new bottles of the minds of men." His heart weeps for the floating population of expropriated land workers and handicraftsmen, and he would welcome a revolution that brings the healing

balm of love, peace and prosperity to the tormented and the blighted:

> . . . if there is anything which has accrued to me through my pilgrimage of the world it is the belief that I must help to change the present order built on profit; that I must devote myself entirely to the poor. . . .[65]

Colonel Mahindra, in *The Old Woman and the Cow*, also undertakes a laborious exercise of self-conscious proletarianism:

> All life in our country today, everything in it, has been poisoned by the importance given to money, property and possession! . . . First there were the white sahibs and now there are the brown sahibs. . . . And for one good man at the head there are millions of self-seekers. . . .[66]

With Anand the recurrent motif is: "Where there is poverty there is a money-lender, a priest and a landlord -- and God is always on their side." Another mouthpiece of his, Iqbal Nath Sirshar, the Communist Party organizer for Northern India, harangues:

> If it had not been for the wily Brahmins, the priestcraft, who came in the pride of their white skin, lifted the pure philosophical idea of *karma* that deeds and acts are dynamic, that all is in a flux, every thing changes, from the Dravidians, and misinterpreted it vulgarly to mean that birth, and rebirth, in this universe is governed by good or bad deeds in the past life, India would have offered the best instance of a democracy. As it is, caste is an intellectual aristocracy based on the conceit of the pundits. . . .[67]

In Khwaja Ahmad Abbas's *Inqilab*, a Socialist Realist novel on the theme of India's struggle for independence -- both militant and non-violent -- in the post-World War I period and Gandhi's movement of communal harmony and *satyagraha*, there appears the interloping story of a prince who, against the wishes of his father, goes West, "the direction in which lies much evil and great danger":

> It was a long and tortuous journey over the hills and endless burning deserts. Finally the prince journeyed on through rain and storms until he came to the City of Horrors. Here the scene that met his eyes was indeed a terrible one. Thousands of men, women and children were tied by chains to a gigantic mill which they were turning round and round. Towering above them stood an enormous ogre, with his head in the clouds and his feet dug deep in the earth, with a whip in his hand which fell without mercy on anyone who slackened. Fearful was the noise produced by the stones of the mill which were as big as hills. Horror-struck the Prince . . . looked closely at the mill-stones and knew that it was human grist they were grinding.

> Every now and then the ogre would pick up a few of his victims and throw them into the fearful mill. And all the while the slaves went round and round, their heads bowed and their chains clattering, turning the engines of their own destruction! The prince's heart bled for these poor wretches and he tried to free one of them by untying the chain. But the man stopped him saying, 'It's no use, brother. We are yoked to this mill until the Red Star appears in the sky. Only then shall we be free. . . .'[68]

At Aligarh University, young Anwar, the protagonist, makes friends with Subhan, who was "one of the small group nick-named 'Russians' because they were always talking ecstatically of the wonderful things being done in the Soviet Union, and were alleged to have sympathies with communists." And to him the views expressed by the "Marxist" were indeed revolutionary:

> There was no accepted value that he had not attacked -- religion, nationalism, morality, love! Religion, he had said on the authority of Lenin, was the opium with which the ruling classes drugged the people. Nationalism was the capitalists' device to wrest power for themselves. Morality was bunk, and love ('a question of glandular activity and hormones') -- why it was no more sacred than drinking a glass of water! He . . . used strange and frightening words like "dialectics", "bourgeoisie", "proletariat", "Oedepus complex", "fixations" and "inhibitions". . . .[69]

"It is in the mills and factories of the new industrial India," Subhan had not the least doubt, "that the proletariat will make the revolution and not in an 'ashram' where a saint is preparing to frighten the British lion by placing a pinch of home-made salt on its tail. . . ."[70]

In the Indian villages, peasants lived in poverty and misery and filth and there was cruelty and oppression, and mute millions waiting to be freed, all over the country:

> As a child Anwar had seen some villages near Gurgaon, when he stayed with his uncle. He had also seen and been shocked by the poverty of the clusters of mud huts around Aligarh. But the village [on the Agra Road] was indescribable. If it had not been for the few dark, skinny and practically naked children walking around the lanes, one would have thought it to be the ruins of a deserted village. Destitution and despair seemed to have settled on it. There was not a hut that was not in disrepair, not a man or woman who was not in rags, not a child who was healthy. . . . The peasant with ribs sticking out of his taut dark skin whom he questioned said the crop had been normal and except for the usual cases of cholera in the rainy season and a few deaths from pneumonia in the winter, there had been no epidemics, either. The grim poverty, the desolution,

> the death-like inertia . . . in the village was a permanent feature, like the leaden-grey sky above or the dark dried-up earth beneath![71]

The adolescent heir-apparent of Salampur State -- who represented "a whole system, a way of life, an entire epoch, that was stale and poisonous" -- possessed, for his age,

> . . . an extraordinary rich experience of sex life in both its normal and abnormal aspects. . . . There were an astonishingly large number of young and comely maid-servants around the palace and . . . [his] idea of a brief spell of fun was to invite one of them to ride with him in the lift which would be stopped midway between the floors for an amorous interlude. After a few minutes the young rake would return, his cheeks flushed, and his beady eyes sparkling with passion, to describe the adventure in detail to his admiring crowd of flunkeys. This one was a little shy! That one was quite bold! The third hoped to get a pearl necklace as her price. . . .[72]

Yashwant, the Marxist intellectual created by Abbas, is a chronic invalid, confined to bed, emaciated and lean, a bearded skeleton, and the only living thing in his body seemed to be "his eyes -- prominent, frightening and charged with a strange and wild magnetism." The walls of his ramshackle lodgings, a garage, are covered with "pictures of Karl Marx, Tolstoy, Lenin, Stalin, a red flag with hammer and sickle, tapestries from Kathiawar, and a fever chart. Books were everywhere -- in shelves, on the table, on a long bench that was placed by the bed-side and on the bed itself." He is helplessly ill but is working devotedly on a Gujerati translation of Marx's *Capital*, and explains:

> I had to do something. If I was fit I would have joined the Communist Party or worked in a trade union. Now I can only lie here and read and sometimes write. The present order is sick and rotten to the core -- *like me* -- and it must die! The sooner the better. . . .[73]

Christopher Caudwell expects revolutionary democratic intellectuals to act as spokesmen for "the people," and argues that Art "cannot escape its close relation with the genotype whose secret desires link in one endless series all human culture. . . ."[74] The *leftists* consciously select, sift, evaluate and pronounce judgement on the material they incorporate in their work. They maintain that the ideology of the author alone determines whether a work by proletarian or not. Gorky, the founder of Socialist Realism, wrote about the working people -- it is claimed -- not only as an existing force, but also as a force beginning to realize its historic mission in social development:

> In the creative work of Maxim Gorky the proletariat first gained awareness of itself artistically, just as it did philosophically and politically in the work of Marx, Engels and Lenin. . . .[75]

Gorky's definition of Socialist Realism -- "realism of people who are changing, remaking the world, realistic imaginative thinking based on socialist experience. . . ."[76] -- is taken to its logical extreme by Mao Tse-tung when he enunciated, at the Yenan Conference, the "worker, peasant, soldier line" for literature -- and emphasized its active, transformatory nature and fidelity to life:

> All revolutionary artists and writers of China, all artists and writers of high promise, must, for long periods of time, unreservedly and whole-heartedly go into the midst of the masses, the masses of workers, peasants and soldiers; they must go into fiery struggles, go to the only, the broadest, the richest source to observe, learn, study and analyse all men, all classes, all kinds of people, all the vivid patterns of life and struggle and all raw material for art and literature, before they can proceed to creation. . . .[77]

As the political setup smothers the expression of the writer's aspiration to creative freedom by the dead hand of its directives -- and decides for him the color and timbre of his voice -- the Soviet Socialist Realist dares explore, experiment or challenge his milieu only at the risk of alienation, or much worse. His imaginative writing completely molded by the two main official requirements "people-mindedness" (*narodnost*) and "Party-mindedness" (*partiinost*) tends to consist more of stereotyped rhetoric and Marxist gusto than deep emotive content and wide historical perspective. Even "the well-known 'Soviet humanism' like 'Hottentot morals'," analyses V. I. Hryshko, in a tone of well-deserved sarcasm,

> is guided by the principle that any crime against mankind is branded as an atrocity if it is committed by fascism or any other system, but immediately becomes the height of humaneness if it is committed by "our government". . . .[78]

With the morbid class-conscious writers imaginative writing tends to lack concreteness and becomes rather flat and explicatory instead of dramatic and memorable. The personal integrity of the writer demands, of course, that he should not avoid the big social and political issues of his land if his work is to have a certain depth, value, beauty and dignity. In giving expression to the plight of his people a sort of traumic experience naturally possesses his sensibility. But

> . . . a novelist deals not only with situations but also, and above all, with individuals. And it is precisely the cycle created by the responses of men to the pressure of events, their evolutions at significant levels of feeling and thought, that makes the real world of the novel. . . .[79]

Chinua Achebe, the best known novelist from Black Africa, the importance of whose novels

> . . . derives not simply from his theme, but also from his complete presentation of men in action, in living

> reaction to their fate, as well as from his own perception that underlies his imaginative world and confers upon it relevance and truth. . . .[80]

regards the writer as "the sensitive point in the community," specially equipped to know in a sensitive way what is prominent in the minds, what are the most pressing concerns of the people of and for whom he writes; but he states emphatically that "the writer's duty is not to beat this morning's headlines in topicality, it is to explore the depth of the human condition":

> I believe that the writer should be concerned with the question of human values. . . . We sometimes make the mistake of talking about values as though they were fixed and eternal. . . . [But] values are relative and in a state of flux. . . .[81]

And not unlike "The Hollow Men" of T. S. Eliot, these die-hard radicals, with their head-pieces stuffed by Party tutelage with notions that are astringent, uncouth and vacuous, have monotonous voices which

> Are quiet and meaningless
> As wind in dry grass
> Or rats' feet over broken glass
> In our dry cellar
> Shape without form, shade without color,
> Paralysed force, gesture without motion. . . .

Coexistence of ideology and artistry comprises, so to say, the most usual and the only inevitable relationship between poles of one axis. As Anthony Adamovich has succinctly put it:

> In certain non-Russian literary circles this position finds a sort of theoretical basis in the Biblical formula for coexistence: 'Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's' so that ideology and political awareness are regarded as a tribute which the writer cannot avoid paying to the Caesar of Soviet life -- the Party -- in order to enable him to serve his own God -- literature -- with genuine artistic creativity. . . .[82]

Indubitably a good novel should basically be an impression containing myriad layers of experience and not a mere argument, however grave, logical and significant. "Unlike a work of science or philosophy," reflects Edwin Berry Burgum,

> a work of art is not a structure of ideas determined by some rational method of abstraction from experience. It is rather a reproduction of experience itself, as a pattern of sensory impressions, the meanings of which are not so much stated as inferred. . . .[83]

Gustave Flaubert advises that even the artist who recognizes the need for ideas in abundance "must have neither religion, nor country, nor social conviction. . . ."[84] Lawrence Durrell also pleads, somewhat cynically, against the reduction of literature to a doctrinal statement:

> From the very beginning of recorded history, our world has been apparently in the same disturbed and racked condition. Every attempt at a humane or rational order is subject to limitations of Time, on whose slippery surface neither kings nor empires nor dictators could find more than a precarious and temporary purchase. . . .[85]

As regards the vitality of the novelist's conception of human nature inducted into the novel William Walsh makes this observation:

> Every great novel is a lesson for us, not a didactic lesson, not just good advice, but a lesson in the sense that it embodies a literary idea. The lesson of a work of art . . . is the idea that lurks in any vision prompted by life. It is the complex truth distilled by the great writer's intricate apprehension of reality. . . .[86]

The realm of the true artist is, undoubtedly, the region of emotion, the recesses of the human heart and he should not act as an instructor, but as a crucible of creative endeavor towards esthetic evolution. Whatever virtues a work of fiction might possess, it is incomplete unless it has artistic merit and the presentation stirs the reader's sensibility. Not unexpectedly, therefore, the mechanical Marxist philosophy of a number of these Socialist Realists in India degenerates into a non-human anthropology as it does not reintegrate the living man into itself as its foundation; as a result, their writing remains anaemic, a veritable dead sea apple.

"Art must make its own way and by its own means," postulates Leon Trotsky in no uncertain terms, "[and] the Marxian methods are not the same as the artistic. . . ."[87] Even Friedrich Engels is unwilling to impose explicit educational or inspirational role on art. In his view a Socialist-based novel fully achieves its purpose if

> . . . by consciously describing real mutual relations, breaking down conventional illusions about them, it shatters the optimism of the bourgeois, instils doubt to the eternal character of the existing order, although the author does not offer any definite solution or does not even line up openly on any particular side. . . .[88]

Testifying, in a way, both to the substantial unity of people and to the infinite individualization of their spiritual reserves, Marx and Engels wrote

in the *Manifesto of the Communist Party:*

> The intellectual creations of individual nations become common property. National one-sidedness and narrow-mindedness became more and more impossible, and from the numerous national and local literatures there arises a world literature.[89]

And Marx further notes that "one and the same object is processed differently by different people, and its various aspects are turned into equally various spiritual characters. . . ."[90]

FOOTNOTES

1. Bertrand Russell, *Power, A Social Analysis* (London, 1960), p. 80.
2. N. K. Basu, *Studies in Gandhism* (Calcutta, 1947), p. 43.
3. Mahadeva Prasad, *Social Philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi* (Gorakhpur, 1958), p. 137.
4. Cited by B. R. Nanda in "Prefatory Paper" contributed to the Seminar on "Socialism in India 1919-1939; A Retrospect," 28-30 November 1968, Delhi (unpublished).
5. M. N. Roy, "The Cult of Non-Violence," *Independent India*, II, 30 (1938), p. 469.
6. C. E. Merriam, *The Role of Politics in Social Change* (London, 1936), p. 66.
7. Rahul Sankrityayana, *Manāv samāj* (Allahabad, 1948), p. 338.
8. R. Palme Dutt, *India Today* (Bombay, 1947), p. 334.
9. Nirad C. Chaudhuri, *The Continent of Circe* (London, 1965), p. 31.
10. Kamala Markandaya, *Nectar in a Sieve* (Bombay, 1956), pp. 39-40.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 75.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 85.
13. *Ibid.*, pp. 130-131.
14. *Ibid.*, pp. 150-151.
15. Bhabani Bhattacharya, *So Many Hungers* (Bombay, 1947), p. 147.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 149.
17. *Ibid.*, pp.30-31.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 279.
19. *Ibid.*, pp. 145-46.
20. *Ibid.*, pp. 168-69.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 235.

22. Bhabani Bhattacharya, *Shadow from Ladakh* (New York, 1966), p. 6.

23. *Ibid.*, p. 67.

24. *Ibid.*, p. 77.

25. *Ibid.*, p. 78.

26. *Ibid.*, p. 80.

27. *Ibid.*, pp. 310-11.

28. Nayantara Sahgal, *This Time of Morning* (New York, 1965), p. 49.

29. Nayantara Sahgal, *Prison and Chocolate Cake* (Bombay, 1964), p. 74.

30. Nayantara Sahgal, *Storm in Chandigarh* (New York, 1969), p. 245.

31. Nayantara Sahgal, *Prison and Chocolate Cake*, p. 190.

32. Nayantara Sahgal, *Storm in Chandigarh*, pp. 116-17.

33. Raja Rao, *Kanthapura* (Bombay, 1947), pp. 15-16.

34. *Ibid.*, pp. 16-17.

35. *Ibid.*, pp. 250-51.

36. *Ibid.*, p. 41.

37. Raja Rao, *The Serpent and the Rope* (London, 1960), p. 37.

38. *Ibid.*, p. 17.

39. *Ibid.*, p. 179.

40. *Ibid.*, p. 176.

41. Amrita Pritam, An Interview, *Mahfil, A Quarterly of South Asian Literature*, X, (1968-69), pp. 7-8.

42. Khushwant Singh, *Train to Pakistan* (London, 1956), pp. 52-53.

43. *Ibid.*, p. 195.

44. *Ibid.*, p. 58.

45. *Ibid.*, p. 87.

46. Khushwant Singh, *I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale* (London, 1959), pp. 23-24.

47. *Ibid.*, p. 39.

48. Manohar Malgonkar, *The Princes* (London, 1963), p. 18.

49. *Ibid.*, p. 271.

50. *Ibid.*, p. 50.

51. *Ibid.*, pp. 288-89.

52. *Ibid.*, p. 358.

53. Gopal Mittal, *The March of a Conspiracy: Writers as Accessories* (Delhi, 1956), pp. 3-4.

54. Sajjad Zaheer, "Thirty Years of Indian Progressive Writers' Movement," paper contributed to the 6th All India Progressive Writers' Conference, 28 December 1966 to 1 January 1967, Delhi (unpublished).

55. Mulk Raj Anand, "Writers Role in Modern Society", paper contributed to the 6th All India Progressive Writers Conference, Delhi (unpublished).

56. *Ibid.*

57. Mulk Raj Anand, Introduction, *Meet My People* (Hyderabad, 1951), pp. 30-31.

58. Mulk Raj Anand, *Two Leaves and a Bud* (Bombay, 1951), p. 106.

59. Mulk Raj Anand, *The Big Heart* (Bombay, n.d.), p. 57.

60. Mulk Raj Anand, *Coolie* (Bombay, n.d.), pp. 159-160.

61. Mulk Raj Anand, *The Sword and the Sickle* (Bombay, 1955), pp. 214-215.

62. *Ibid.*, p. 216.

63. Mulk Raj Anand, *Private Life of an Indian Prince* (London, 1953), p. 216.

64. Louis Fischer, *Machines and Men in Russia* (New York, 1932), pp. 262-63.

65. Anand, *The Big Heart*, p. 143.

66. Mulk Raj Anand, *The Old Woman and the Cow* (Bombay, 1960), pp. 241-42.

67. Mulk Raj Anand, *Untouchable* (Bombay, n.d.), p. 131.

68. Khwaja Ahmad Abbas, *Inqilab* (Bombay, 1955), pp. 14-15.

69. *Ibid.*, p. 180.

70. *Ibid.*, p. 282.

71. *Ibid.*, pp. 183-84.

72. *Ibid.*, pp. 192-93.

73. *Ibid.*, p. 324.

74. Christopher Caudwell, *Illusion and Reality* (London, 1946), p. 206.

75. A. Lunacharsky, *Russian Literature: Selected Articles* (Moscow, 1947), p. 393.

76. Maxim Gorky, *Collected Works*, XXVII (Moscow, 1953), p. 44.

77. Mao Tse-tung, *Talks: Selected Works* (New York, 1956), p. 77.

78. V. I. Hryshko, "The Living and the Dead in Ukrainian Soviet Prose," *Slovo*, no. 1 (1962), p. 81.

79. Abiola Irele, "The Tragic Conflict in Achebe's Novels," *Introduction to African Literature*, ed. Ulli Beier (London, 1967), p. 32.

80. *Ibid.*

81. Chinua Achebe, "The Role of the Writer in a New Nation," *Nigeria Magazine*, no. 81 (June 1964), p. 159.

82. Anthony Adamovich, "Current Trends in Non-Russian Soviet Literature," *Soviet Literature: Conflict and Control* (Munich, 1963), p. 74.

83. Edwin Berry Burgum, *The Novel and the World's Dilemma* (New York, 1947), p. 9.

84. Gustave Flaubert, *Correspondence* (Paris, 1926-33), III, p. 183.

85. Lawrence Durrell, "No Clue to Living," *Writers' Dilemma* (London, 1964), p. 21.

87. Leon Trotsky, *Literature and Revolution* (New York, 1925), p. 170.

88. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Literature and Art: Selections* (New York, 194?), p. 45.

89. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Selected Works*, I (Moscow, 1962), p. 38.

90. *Ibid.*, p. 7.

MULK RAJ ANAND: THE NOVELIST AS NOVELIST

Marlene Fisher

Manhattanville College

In a challenging article, Professor R. K. Kaushik has written of Mulk Raj Anand as follows:

> He has neglected the whole man by writing exclusively of . . . material needs. . . . Character has become subordinated to purpose. . . . He takes 'ideas' and not 'character' for his starting point. And, as he fails to imply the character of each personage in the ideas of which he is the mouthpiece, his fiction becomes padded with abstractions.[1]

Such comments are pointed and serious, particularly insofar as they are representative of the general view of an important group of critics who see Anand chiefly as a Socialist Realist writer. Professors Margaret Berry and C. Paul Verghese,[2] for example, while recognizing aspects of Anand's achievements, have focused upon the overt didacticism of the European Socialist Realist tradition which they have found to be dominant in his works. Yet, Anand's novels themselves are much larger and much more artful than such interpretations imply. In fact, to view Anand as a Socialist Realist is to bypass what is best and most lasting in his fiction — the fullness and complexity of his treatment of character and the skill and appropriateness of his handling of form.

Take, for example, Bakha, the untouchable.* A warm, loving boy, Bakha lacks the education that would enable him to articulate his feelings and half-thoughts. Yet (and this recognition is what Anand's skill permits) his every instinctive response bespeaks a natural dignity and a growing, if inchoate, sense of self. When, in a key symbolic and metaphoric scene, he is slapped in the face for having failed to announce his sweeper-presence, Bakha feels, first, all the fury and, secondarily, the anguish that an outrage against one's self evokes.

> But there was a smouldering rage in his soul. His feelings would rise like spurts of smoke from a half-smothered fire, in fitful, unbalanced jerks when the recollection of some abuse or rebuke he had suffered kindled a spark in the ashes of remorse inside him. And in the smoky atmosphere of his mind arose dim ghosts of forms peopling the scene he had been through. . . .

---

*The following discussion will make no attempt to deal with all of Anand's novels, but will confine itself to a representative few.

> 'Why was all this?' He asked himself in the soundless speech of cells receiving and transmitting emotions, which was his usual way of communicating with himself. . . .[3]

That Bakha's rage is "smouldering," that his feelings are compared with "spurts of smoke from a half-smothered fire," that the atmosphere of his mind is "smoky," and that his struggling dialogue with himself is conducted "in the soundless speech of cells receiving and transmitting emotions. . . ." -- these are not abstractions, but similes and images which themselves convey Bakha's inability to intellectualize or to articulate and his simultaneous efforts to give expression to his feelings and groping thoughts. They convey, at the same time, who Bakha is and who he is striving to become. It is a mistake to confuse the voice of an omniscient author with abstractness.

Nor is Bakha quite "so servile" or "so spineless [a] victime of the circumstances of birth"[4] as orthodox Socialist Realism might have him.

> Before now, Bakha had often borne the brunt of his misery with a resigned air of fatalism. He had quietly suffered his father's abuse and satire, and even occasional beatings, with a calm that betokened his intense docility and gentleness. He would never lift his head, or his hand, to defend himself against anyone. Today, however, he had had more than enough. The spirit of fire which lay buried in the mass of his flesh had ignited this morning and lay smouldering. A little more fuel and it flared up, like a wild flame. (p. 134)

If the actual social and economic conditions of Bakha's life are verly likely to quench the fire ignited in him, that is not the most important thing. He has something within him that is more than mere abjectness and servility. Even if "today" is neither more nor less than a literal twenty-four hours, something has happened inside from which there can be no real retreat and which is not to be forgotten. He has a dawning sense of becoming, from which there is no going back.

Anand has written, in a letter, that there is a "deep sense of becoming"[5] in his characters and that "there is a flow in each novel of the characters trying to be human, by finding out what is the meaning of their lives."[6] Whatever the constrictions of his surroundings, to be human and, somehow, to learn the meaning of his life represent Bakha's core. If, in terms of his historical era alone, he is doomed to remain a sweeper, he still can, even within that degrading external context, attain an honesty and a dignity of self that must command both respect and compassion. Bakha's honesty and dignity, moreover, are part of the "poetic realism" of *Untouchable*. "Poetic realism" is a term

Anand has used to designate a style that can encompass heart and mind, intuition and reason. It is not a technique of "literary photography,"[7] but one that permits a recreating of "the experiences of other people . . . [their] silent passions . . ., immediate and ultimate sorrows . . ., where they want to go and how they grapple, in their own ways, with their destinies."[8] Such recreations form the matter of Anand's novels.

Although the book does make a plea for the abolition of untouchability itself, that kind of abstract plea is not its heart or center. Its real center lies in the fact that Anand has, in Bakha, conveyed the wish and need of even so lowly a human being to forge an identity of his own and to interact with his fellows with mutual warmth and understanding. In Anand's total, humanistic view of man, one needs no particular schooling to harbor such desires. The heart of the book lies in the eighteen-year-old's shyness, in his vulnerability, and, oddly enough, in Bakha's startling (if intuitive rather than reasoned) work ethic which allows him, while engaged in his tasks, to forget the odiousness of his job and, instead, to be aware of his body.

> He worked away earnestly, quickly, without loss of effort. Brisk, yet steady, his capacity for active application to the task he had in hand seemed to flow like constant water from a natural spring. Each muscle of his body, hard as a rock when it came into play, seemed to shine forth like glass. . . . He seemed as easy as a wave sailing away on a deep-bedded river. (p. 20)

It is no accident that Anand here uses the simile of water flowing from a natural spring, with all its connotations of freshness and cleanness and sweetness, in connection with Bakha, the sweeper of excrement! Moreover, the youth's freshness and innate nobility are un-self-conscious and unsentimental. These qualities are just as much a part of who Bakha is as is the fact that he is a sweeper, and they remain with him and flash out even in his moments of murderous anger and frustration or of abysmal despair and unhappiness.

The heart of *Untouchable* is also Bakha's sense of wonder at life, unquenchable in spite of the constant abuse against which he hides his face. The boy is, indeed, among the most naive of Anand's characters, but that very naiveté -- or trustingness, to put in other terms -- is part of his charm. The words of the proseltyzing English priest, with their emphasis on sin, mean little to Bakha. But if he could wear the kind of trousers the Sahib wore or speak his language! A little later, while listening to an address delivered by the Mahatma, Bakha's warmheartedness responds to the personal eloquence of the speaker's words. He wanted to break in "and say to the Mahatma: 'Now, Mahatmaji, now you are talking.'" (p. 168) It is precisely such recreating of character that is Anand's poetic realism. Both the poetry and the realism are to be found in the author's concrete penetration into and presentation of Bakha. There is no glibly optimistic hope held out for so uneducated and oppressed a youth -- not from Christianity, not from

Gandhism, not even from the flush toilet. But what is there is the delicacy and fragility of the life force and the ache to live.

The dawning inwardness of Bakha, as well as his loveliness, are brought into sharp relief by the classical purity of the novel's form. *Untouchable* has a cast of very few, it takes place within a period of less than twenty-four hours, and all that happens leads up to and follows from the climactic incident of the slap in the face. Ironically enough, the book's very cleanness of structure accentuates the uncleanness, not so much of Bakha's work as of the minds and sensibilities of those among whom he lives. If the temple priest is a dirty-minded lecher or if the townsmen are cruel and the women malicious gossipers, their falsely superior upper-casteness is in striking contrast to Bakha. It is not Bakha who pollutes them so much as their own fear of being polluted, a fear that can only dehumanize and corrupt.

Although it may be argued that some of *Untouchable's* passages are too heavily adjectival or suffer from some flaw or another, the novel's total effect is consciously and powerfully cumulative. As we follow Bakha from one incident to another, as we see him next to the townsmen or the priest or his sister or his father, we come to a knowledge of Bakha himself. He does, to be sure, begin to take on near-mythic qualities in that, as well as being Bakha, he is also occasionally Sweeper.[9] But he remains to the very end, in his parts and in the totality of his yearning being, individual. Neither mouthpiece nor abstraction, he is, beautifully, himself.

Or take Munoo in Anand's second novel, *Coolie*. Though sharing in the best and most responsive of Bakha's qualities, Munoo remains a less successful character than Bakha, as *Coolie* remains ultimately a less satisfying novel than *Untouchable*. The reasons for this, however, are in no way attributable to Anand's subordinating character creation -- "the whole man" -- to any political ideology or to his padding his fiction with abstractions. The chief reason, rather, is that Munoo is inwardly a more passive character than Bakha -- or than Lal Singh of *The Village* or Ananta of *The Big Heart* -- and this in spite of the many adventures in which he finds himself. Some of the best scenes in *Coolie*, for example, are those in which Munoo is largely a spectator, such as the beating and arrest of Prabha or the pre-strike riots in Bombay. His experiences -- in the Sahib's home in Sham Nagar, in the pickle factory in Daulatpur, in the mill in Bombay, and in the foothills of the Himalayas with May -- tend to become more interesting and absorbing than Munoo himself. Although he is the main character in *Coolie*, he remains slightly off-center.

Like Bakha, Munoo has those appealing characteristics of warmth, kindness, zest, wonder at life, and youth. Only fourteen years old, he has had more schooling than eighteen-year-old Bakha, having gone as far as the fifth class. Thus, he is better able than Bakha to articulate into questions some of the contrasts and injustices that have been woven into the fabric of his life experiences. Although not an untouchable, Munoo is nevertheless subjected to all kinds of physical, emotional, and spiritual abuse because he is, in his view and in fact, poor.

> 'Money is everything,' his uncle had said on the day of his journey to town. 'Money is, indeed, everything,' Munoo thought. And his mind dwelt for the first time on the difference between himself, the poor boy, and his masters, the rich people, between all the poor people in his village and Jay Singh's father, the landlord. . . . Whether there were more rich or more poor people, there seemed to be only two kinds of people in the world. Caste did not matter. 'I am a Kshutriya and I am poor, and Varma, a Brahmin, is a servant boy, a menial, because he is poor. No, caste does not matter. . . . There must only be two kinds of people in the world: the rich and the poor.'[10]

This kind of generalizing and theorizing from the basis of concrete experience is rather more sophisticated than what Bakha was capable of. Yet, Munoo can never get much beyond the question-asking stage. Even later, when he asks, "'Why,' . . . ' are some men so good and others bad -- some like Prabha and the elephant-driver and others like Ganpat and the policeman who beat me at the railway station'?" (p. 171), he falls short of either trying to suggest answers to such questions or of seeing the relationship between the quality of his life of more or less enforced running away and the over-all social and economic conditions of the world he inhabits.

This point has been astutely made by the critic D. Riemenschneider, who has written: "Munoo is not the common type of hero or protagonist we expect to find in a character novel. In his opposition to society, he is passive, while society is active. Munoo does not build his own life, which, on the contrary, is built for him."[11] In spite of his immense charm and likeableness, Munoo never quite attains the simple, inner dignity of Bakha. And he augurs less well for the future than his slightly older counterpart, not because he dies at the end of the novel, but because he never quite confronts himself as Bakha attempts to do. He never quite manages to see his life as other than a literal series of unrelated experiences.

Even though Munoo is wanting in a total roundedness and fullness, he is by no means a failure in all respects. On the contrary, he lends himself to comparison with a character such as Huckleberry Finn. Like Huck, Munoo is in that precarious, tremulous, and vulnerable stage of a child on the brink of adulthood. Indeed, a preoccupation of Munoo's -- as of all of Anand's adolescent characters, from Nakha right up through Krishan of *Morning Face* -- is his desire to become a man.

> Munoo would have liked to shave his beard with a sharp, long razor of his master's which was used to sharpen pencils. . . . But there was as yet no hair on his cheeks or his chin. He wished he could grow up soon and have a beard. He wanted to become a man. . . . (pp. 109-110)

Neither child nor adult, Munoo, almost as if he were shadowboxing, moves back and forth between both worlds, belonging to neither. In his boyishness,

his eyes pop at the wonders and at the excitement in each new place. In his approaching maturity, he is pained by the cruelty he sees occurring all around him. So, too, is Huck Finn, in his natural goodness and youthfulness, awe-struck at and uncomprehending of the evil that pervades life, both off and finally on the River.

Munoo, like most of Anand's major characters and, of course, like Huck, searches for an identity, though Huck's search is more profound. Moreover, Huck Finn is better able than Munoo to see himself in the context of his society as a whole. It is in this respect that Anand does not get inside Munoo to the extent that Twain has gotten inside Huck. If Huck is traceable historically to the character of the *picar*, so too is Munoo a boy who lives by his wits and native shrewdness -- and by lucky or unlucky accidents -- rather than by settling into a given life-style his society might prescribe for him. However, less seriously rebellious than Huck, Munoo is also less able to take command and to assert himself. Although eventually broken by the money-greed, inhumanity, and desire for personal prestige on the parts of his employers, Indian and British both, Munoo remains strangely detached. Without a Jim to love and become personally involved with (Munoo's friendships with Ratan and later with Mohan are too brief to meet the needs of the boy's affectionate nature), Munoo is acted upon rather than acting. "The darker shades of his experience" (*Coolie*, p. 161) were ultimately to stifle even his seemingly boundless gaiety.

In structure, too, *Coolie* is quite different from the artistically economical tightness of *Untouchable* and is, at the same time, akin to the picaresqueness of *Huckleberry Finn*. Munoo is on the move -- from his native village of Bilaspur, to the town of Sham Nagar, to the city of Daulatpur, to the much larger city of Bombay, and finally to Kalka, reminiscent of the beautiful Kangra Hills which were his birthplace. Functioning similarly in some respects to the image of the Mississippi River in *Huckleberry Finn*, the railway and the road dominate *Coolie*. Both are the transporting means Munoo takes to escape situations that have become more painful or intolerable than he can bear. A sense of movement and its attendant color and restlessness -- not only of Munoo, but of all India -- makes itself felt throughout the novel. As one might expect, Munoo's travels over so wide an area involve him with a much larger number of people than Bakha is able to meet in his more circumscribed surroundings. The diffuseness of *Coolie*'s form, however, and its large cast of characters emphasize the lack of a stable center of identity or even of a real search in Munoo himself. That lack, though, is not at all the result of Anand's political beliefs.

Nor are politics, propaganda, or didacticism evident in *The Village* or its major character, Lal Singh.* Neither classical nor picaresque, the form of *The Village* is based upon the rhythms of the events, feelings, and

---

*This discussion will not refer to *Across the Black Waters* or *The Sword and the Sickle*, sequels to *The Village*.

thoughts that are Lal Singh's daily portions. The novel opens with Lalu's rushing to meet his over seventy-year-old father at the train station upon the latter's return from town -- a perfectly normal activity for the boy -- and proceeds from the slight tension evident there between father and son to other equally mundane activities and to the host of questions Lalu continues to ask about the feelings and relationships that lie just under their surface. A kind of *Bildungsroman*, it is organized around a series of routine happenings as they are perceived and reacted to by Lal Singh himself. It moves step by step through the resonances of Lalu's inner responses to external events and ends with the boy's rejection of and running away from his religion, his family, and the stifling confines of his village to join the army. However, even in the midst of his anger and pain, Lal Singh has achieved too much consciousness of self, of his land-rooted, Indian self, to ignore the springs of his being. He knew precisely what his having volunteered for military service meant.

> It was an escape from the village for some time. If he came back after a little time abroad, . . . perhaps he could resign through the help of some officer, and go back to the land. He must do that. He was determined. . . . And as . . . impressions . . . swirled through him, he half-mumbled to the wind, as if it could carry his message to the village, 'I will come back to you; but not yet, not for a while.'[12]

Although Anand has been criticized for his "inability . . . to realize the complexities of the ordinary human mind",[13] it is the very complexities of Lal Singh that Anand so convincingly portrays. *The Village* depicts Lalu's growth towards a sensitive, committed manhood, and it does so through dramatic incidents which reveal the youth's adolescent humiliations, his fears and newly-sensed sexual longings, his rebelliousness and independence of spirit, and his liveliness and intellectual curiosity. Moreover, these dramatic portrayals occur within the rich setting of the village itself, with all its tangled patterns of family and communal life.

One such key incident is Lalu's decision -- along with its consequences -- to cut his hair. Such an action was a monumental gesture of defiance against the Sikhism in which he had been reared and nurtured and against his parents and the other elders of the village, the authority figures who refused, as Lalu saw it, to recognize his worth or to give him a chance to prove his manhood. It was not a particularly precipitous decision, the one that led to his sitting guiltily in the barber's chair. But it was a marvelously adolescent one that indicates with beautiful clarity Lalu's frustration and feelings of being cramped as well as his bursting need to be seen as someone more than simply his father's son. Yes, he would show them.

> They were always forbidding you to do this and
> that, these elders, always curtailing your
> liberty. Always frustrating your desires.
> Always frustrating. You couldn't even laugh
> in their presence. You had to join your hands
> gravely and say, 'I fall at your feet.' . . .
> What could he do? (pp. 55-56)

But after the fact, when Lalu returned home, he felt all the wet-palm symptoms of a child who has wilfully disobeyed:

> . . . he felt the fear of the unpleasantness that
> would ensure, the ache of apprehension. . . .
> He stopped for the briefest moment and
> lifted his hand to his turban to see that
> it was still wound tightly round the back
> of his shingled head to conceal any traces
> that might give the game away too soon. (p. 88)

Embarrassed, nervous, conscious of the blow the cutting of his hair would be to his family, Lalu nevertheless finally pulled off his turban, and "there was a gasp of horror, followed by a moment of stunned silence." (p. 91) The cursing and screaming and wailing then thunderously broke loose, and in the center of the storm stood Lalu, simultaneously bewildered and defiant. Even worse than his family's reaction, though, was that of the village. "Lalu knew in a flash what they meant to do. They must have heard the rumour and wanted to disgrace him publicly by taking him with blackeded face through the streets of the village seated on a donkey. Under no circumstances should they." (p. 95)

"Under no circumstances should they" humiliate Lal Singh. What significance, after all, was attached to uncut hair? This kind of question, and many others like it, Lalu had asked himself time and time again, but they were never any satisfying answers. Besides, much more immediate and compelling than religious rituals and restrictions was his new perception of Maya. In a scene that is almost a kind of epiphany, Anand shows Lalu suddenly flooded with the warmth of awareness of the young girl-woman he had known as a child. What to make of it all? "The picture of the girl suddenly blurred in his mind. Only the perfume of her body remained, and the memory of her touch spread over his senses." (p. 64) In the confusion of his emerging self, Lalu deals with the new inexplicable sense of sexual pleasure and longing by some exuberant physical roughhousing with his friends.

It is not only sexual energy that gives Lalu his vitality. His intellectual energy and curiosity manifest themselves throughout *The Village*. He notes the conditions of the familiar, hard-working people around him, the "slow decay" and "the general decripitude" (p. 146) of his village, and determines to do something to help. That energy and curiosity are apparent in his constant challenging of what to others is simply accepted. His inner conflicts and

youthful charm exist side by side in that, while rejecting village superstitions, Lalu is nevertheless himself subject to fears of the night, to worries about ghosts and hobgoblins, and even, perhaps, of a revenging God. His sensitive responses to conditions and changes in nature, his affectionateness and warmth, his intuitive respect for and appreciation of what is best in other people -- all these qualities are part of the total self that Lal Singh is rapidly becoming, a complex self that is indicative of Anand's skill in creating complex, rounded characters. If Lalu "is still too immature to know which ideas could replace those traditional concepts he dislikes, . . . he himself realizes the lack of direction."[14] And it is that realization, along with his impulsiveness and willingness to take action, that helps make him as fully credible a character as he is. Rich and delightful, Lalu knows his world. What he still seeks to find are ways in which he can help make that world better.

To help make his world better is the central effort and commitment in the life of Ananta of *The Big Heart*. The betterment for which he strives, and for which he ultimately loses his life, is not one that is based upon political or ideological creeds or abstractions; it is, instead, rooted in his belief in and recognition of the fundamental, innate, if partially lost, dignity and humanness of his fellow men. Older and more mature than Lal Singh, Ananta is every way a complex character of maturity. He is cognizant of the gap between the real and the ideal in the conditions under which he and the other members of his coppersmith brotherhood live in the "crumbling and rickety" lane, called Billimaran, Cat-Killer's Lane, in Amritsar.[15] He is able to take steps to translate his inner vision into concrete reality. If that inner vision is one which makes his own happiness and well-being dependent upon the happiness and well-being of the rest of his community, such is Ananta's unstudied, caring humanity.

For those who see Anand as chiefly a Socialist Realist, "It is the ironic control that [he] . . . lacks. And he consistently fails to realize that the declaration of principles is no substitute for the creative and life-like handling of character."[16] However, it is precisely because Ananta is a man of principles that the reader becomes involved in his struggle and is moved by the way in which be brings about his own death. That death, in the total context of the novel, has ironic as well as tragic implications, for it was Ananta, alone among the workers, who understood both the employers and the need to turn the potentially destructive machine to more beneficial, life-supporting uses.

"THIS IS THE IRON AGE, THEY SAY, HAN, THE IRON AGE!" (p. 208) The Industrial Revolution has come later to India than to most of the Western world, and in *The Big Heart*, its effects are felt. It is not simply a matter of technological unemployment, disastrous as that is. It is, even more, a matter of men's fears of the machine, of their lack of understanding of it and, therefore, of their inability even to conceive that they might control it. In the frenzy that culminates in the murder of Ananta, Ralia, raging with fury and frustration, literally sets about destroying the machines in

the factory. "Lifting the hammer in his hand, he shouted: 'I shall show you who is the master, those machines or I. . . . I will spit at these engines, I will destroy them, I shall wipe them off the face of the earth. . . .'" (pp. 212-13) But such destruction, as Ananta knew, was wanton in more ways than one. Ananta's desire to unionize his coppersmith brothers stemmed from his recognition that the strength that could come from such a solidarity might return them to themselves and might thus prepare the way for conditions of sanitation and education and freedom from hunger that technology could help bring about, if properly used. In a conversation with Janki and the revolutionary poet, Purun Singh Bhagat, Ananta expresses his views.

> 'But men like me . . . also want to introduce machinery,' said Ananta with a smile. 'For instance, . . . I would like to persuade the Municipal Committee to lay down gas pipes or electric power here. . . .' (p. 76)

> 'When we thathiars begin to handle the machine,' said Ananta, 'we shall soon show them! . . . We need not become slaves to the profiteers or the machine. We are men.' (p. 78)

> 'I tell you the machine is in our midst, already there!' protested Ananta. 'And we have got to decide to go and work it rather than sulk because we can't get piecework.' (p. 81)

However, even Ananta is no match against the destructiveness that fear, poverty, and the lack of a sense of self-worth have unleashed in the coppersmiths. Both the irony and the tragedy lie in the fact that the very people who most need Ananta are precisely the ones who cut short his life, and that not even out of calculated maliciousness so much as out of their having succumbed to their own worst impulses and fears. It is Ananta's death -- the climax of the novel -- that conveys dramatically what Ananta himself had stated:

> 'Fate! Fate! Fate doesn't decide anything. Oh, I beg you to stop this kind of talk. . . .' shrieked Ananta. . . . 'Oh, come to your senses and let us call all our brotherhood together and resolve upon some course for our betterment. Men are the makers of their own deeds, the makers of their own character, good or bad; and they are the shapers of their own Destiny! So come and make your own fate.' (p. 205)

Ananta had known that a simple call to revolution is inadequate, especially when people are not ready within themselves. It may be that Communism could provide an answer to the question of how to alleviate human misery; trade unionism might provide another; Gandhi may have offered a third. But none would work, he knew, either alone or in combination, unless and until each individual could regain a sense of his own worth and potential. "'There is

no talk of money, brothers; we must have a big heart.'" (p. 11)

Ananta's big heart -- his generosity of spriit, his self-knowledge, his warmth and concern for others -- were both the core of his life and the cause of his death. There is considerable irony in the fact that the one man who was willing to take upon himself the burden of leadership was just the man who, in his personal life, flouted the unwritten strictures of the brotherhood and thus alienated them by living openly with his mistress. But Ananta not only knew himself; he derived strength from that knowledge as well as the courage of continue in his relationship with Janki -- the courage to act upon his feelings -- in spite of the openly expressed disapproval which he met everywhere around him. That Ananta's death was not totally in vain is evidenced in the fact that, at the end, Janki is willing to face personal loss, scorn, and mockery in order to take up and continue the *bhakti yoga*, the devotion to others, that had been Ananta's. The latter's death was more than a personal loss. It was a communal -- and, implicitly, a national -- one also. In the pose between his inner and outer selves; in his bumbling bigness and fear of his own strength; in his fondness for children and theirs for him; in his tenderness and devotion -- in all these ways, Anand makes us believe that the Anantas of India are its hope. But again, it is the author's skill as a novelist that has permitted him "to make the individual typical and to make the typical completely individual."[17]

The structure of *The Big Heart*, in fact, serves to intensify Ananta's life (and death) and to emphasize that merging and unification of the typical and the individual, the public and the private. Ananta, the man of principle whose beliefs compel our involvement, is also Ananta, the shaper and doer, whose actions propel the plot. Like *Untouchable*, *The Big Heart* is compressed into less than twenty-four hours, from early morning to dusk. Even within so short a span, however, Ananta, because of who he is, somehow, ironically, has time -- time for preparing tea for Janki, time for conversation with his poet-friend, time for countless errands, time for laughter and for painful confrontations with the other coppersmiths -- in short, time to live and time to die. While the total and powerful effect of *Untouchable* is cumulative in nature, that of *The Big Heart* is embodied in each scene, in every encounter that Ananta has. That each such encounter, both within Ananta himself and with others, is organically and naturally related to those that precede and follow in itself bespeaks the essential harmony and continuity as well as the many-sided identity of the character Anand has created. In *The Big Heart*, as in all of Anand's major novels, form and content, character and plot, are inextricable.

What real justification is there, then, for attaching to Anand the label of "Socialist Realist writer"?

Even in the early days of his career, in the 1930s, for example, when Anand was closely connected with the Progressive Writers' Association (PWA) and personally accepted the idealistic social goals of Marxism, he never viewed the writer as one whose purpose was chiefly propagandistic of political.

In fact, one of the resolutions adopted by the PWA declares that organization's willingness "to fight for the right of free expression of thought and opinion."[18] Moreover, Anand's own imagination, and, therefore, the characters and narratives he has made, is not of the pedestrian kind to be dictated to by the tenets of a particular school of writing, whether Socialist Realist or anything else. His novels are not handmaidens to a given social or philosophical doctrine. They are, rather, works of fiction, each with an integrity of its own. Anand has always had too much respect for the novelist's craft to write according to a mechanical political formula. As for the protest in his novels, Anand himself has described it as "a protest of humanness against in humanity."[19]

If that kind of humanistic base in literature is to lead to a writer's being categorized as Socialist Realist, then surely some such category would comprise a long list indeed, including names like Balzac or Tolstoy. Any important writer, including Anand, may touch upon politics as one aspect of the human condition -- to the degree, that is, that he is concerned with "the whole man." To put it another way: that Jonathan Swift had at heart the alleviation of the poverty-stricken condition of the Irish when he wrote "A Modest Proposal" does not in any way lessen the brilliance of that piece. In a similar fashion, Ananta's attempts to unionize his co-workers in *The Big Heart* do not make that novel one of political propaganda. The poets -- the makers -- may or may not be "the unacknowledged legislators of the world." They are, however, the acknowledged creators of an art that, at its best, far transcends labels.

Most will agree that, after all, the artist should be granted his choice of subject, whether the rich, the poor, or the inbetween. Dreiser had the right to interest himself in a Sister Carrie, Stephen Crane in a prostitute, or Proust in the aristocratic Guermantes. Critical concerns, then, should not deal with an author's politics, but rather with his skill in conveying a vision of life. Therefore, to label Mulk Raj Anand as a Socialist Realist or Communist or Marxist writer of fiction is beside the point. As Anand himself has commented, "no novelist worth his salt writes from a manifesto, as life does not yield to such treatment."[20]

FOOTNOTES

1. R. K. Kaushik, "From Potter's Wheel to Dragon's Teeth," *Mahfil, A Quarterly of South Asian Literature*, VI, 4 (Winter 1970), 28.

2. See Margaret Berry, *Mulk Raj Anand: The Man and the Novelist* (Amsterdam: Oriental Press, 1971); C. Paul Verghese, "Raja Rao, Mulk Raj Anand, Narayan and Others," *Indian Writing Today*, III, 1 (January-March 1969), 31-38.

3. Mulk Raj Anand, *Untouchable*, rev. ed. (Toronto: Copp Clark, 1970), pp. 59-60.

4. Kaushik, p. 25.

5. Letter from Mulk Raj Anand, 5 November 1971.

6. Letter from Mulk Raj Anand, 2 December 1971.

7. Mulk Raj Anand, *Apology for Heroism* (Bombay: Kutub-Popular, 1957), p. 86.

8. *Ibid.*, pp. 138-39.

9. Berry, p. 93.

10. Mulk Raj Anand, *Coolie*, new rev. ed. (London: The Bodley Head, Ltd., 1972), p. 69.

11. D. Riemenschneider, "An Ideal of Man in Mulk Raj Anand's Fiction," *Indian Literature*, X, 1 (January-March 1967), 32.

12. Mulk Raj Anand, *The Village* (Bombay: Kutub-Popular, 1960), pp. 246, 252.

13. Kaushik, p. 23.

14. Riemenschneider, p. 38.

15. Mulk Raj Anand, *The Big Heart* (Bombay: Kutub-Popular, n.d.), p. 61. The novel was completed in 1944.

16. Kaushik, p. 23.

17. Jack Lindsay, *The Elephant and the Lotus: A Study of the Novels of Mulk Raj Anand* (Bombay: Kutub-Popular, 1965), p. 23.

18. "Manifesto of the Indian Progressive Writers Association," *Left Review*, II, 5 (February 1936), 240.

19. Letter from Mulk Raj Anand, 25 March 1972.

20. Letter from Mulk Raj Anand, 2 December 1971.

JHAVERCHAND MEGHANI: THE PEOPLE'S POET

Gopalan V. Gopalan

Indiana State University

I witness this holy dawn sporting on earth,
Gladdening the hearts of millions,
Exchanging happiness,
In laughter, embraces, and kisses,
With the lover and the beloved meeting in joy.
I stand and stare in wonder and ask,
"Brother, why are you gathered here?"
"O fool, simpleton!" they answer in jest,
"Don't you know that *navaras* starts today?"
The words fell on my ears and I shuddered.
Twenty years of my life have sped by,
Several such bright dawns have flown.
Yet, why did my eyes not open?[1]

Jhaverchand Meghani wrote this in 1916 on his twentieth birthday -- reminiscent of Milton's sonnets "On His Twenty-first Birthday" and "On His Blindness." Yet one does not perceive even in this early poem the romantic nimbus, affectation, the groping for gilded abstractions in the gossamer penumbra of the confused mind, the recondite, jawbreaking, highly ornate Sanskrit diction, and worn-out, archaic imagery so characteristic of the early endeavors of the poets of the first thirty years of this century. As a matter of fact, Umashankar Joshi, a younger contemporary of the poet and an intimate friend of his, pays a glowing tribute to the poetry of Meghani, on the latter's demise in 1947, thus:

> . . . his poetry was not different from folk poetry. He opened the portals of culture to the lowest ranks of society. In assimilating the universal voice he was one without a second. . . . Meghani's poems on contemporary issues appear as if they are the creations of an entire folk rather than that of an individual. . . . He was capable of attaining oneness with folk feelings. And the people appropriately called him the people's poet.[2]

Even Meghani's diction in the poem bears out this encomium. This is true of another early poem of Meghani, written in 1918:

The lamp is glowing dim --
  O, my lamp is glowing dim.
Today the Guest is coming home:
  Reverberations fall every moment;

The entire city is asleep, Lord!
  Who will welcome Thee? --
The lamp is growing dim --
  O, my lamp is growing dim!

Thy chariot is roaring in the heavens;
  The earth is pulsating;
O, Stranger! where will I give Thee bed?
  Tears of joy fill my eyes! -- (The lamp . . .)

"I shall come in the evening, sweetheart!"
  So saying He left;
Today, ages have passed, beloved!
  But Thy steps are turning back! -- (The lamp . . .)

The evening has past; the night has past too;
  O, it is now dawn;
Where's the chariot? Where the Guest? Where worship?
  The dream is slipping away in the sleep.

The lamp is glowing dim --
  O, my lamp is glowing dim![3]

In both the poems the diction is clear, simple, and direct. And the message has the sweetness, pathos, beauty, and vitality of mature poetry. The technique of the imaginary dialogue, the symbolic references to the *navaras* in the first poem, and the dimly glowing lamp, the Stranger Guest, the chariot, evening, and night, reinforce the central vision with a fresh vigor. It is this simplicity and directness of diction that was destined to characterize Meghani's poetry henceforward. But by a delightful coincidence it was also to infuse the bulk of the *substance* of his poetry, appropriately called "folk poetry."

Realism in Meghani

It is not unusual for Gujarati literary critics to call Meghani a romanticizer, a popularizer. Few of his poems exemplify rank romanticism. And Meghani did not wear the robe of the missionary to bring poetry to the people. Of course, he did write of the miseries of the underdog and was, for a time, carried away by the Gandhian philosphy that ruled throughout Gujarati literature between 1915 and 1935. But then there is a considerable difference between those who subjected themselves to the prevailing poetic conventions and Meghani. For instance, if Umashankar Joshi's "Dhobi" (Washerman)[4] composed in 1933 suffers from the then-current poetic trappings such as the artificial dialogue, which is not only far removed from reality but is stilted and affected, and is patently didactic at the end, the source of vitality and poetic energy of Meghani's earlier "Beedio vāḷanareenū geet" composed in 1931 lies in its realistic urgency as the poet portrays the bitter life of the woman who spends her life rolling *beedi*, or home-made

cigarettes, for a living:

Roll the *beedis*, roll the *beedis*, O roll the *beedis*!
Helpless, O roll the *beedis!*
Five hundred for twelve *paisā*, O roll the *beedis!*

The greedy lord -- her husband -- squats in the courtyard
Drenched in opium and drooping;
Will come to eat, demand, the sputter abuses.
Helpless, O roll the *beedis!*

Feel hungry? Yet O roll the *beedis*;
Feel sleepy? Yet O roll the *beedis*.
The eyes are afire;[5] still hold and O roll the *beedis*
Through late night, till daybreak; O roll the *beedis!*
Helpless, O roll the *beedis!*

Forsake the darling, crying child.
If it has fever, apply a wet cloth;
Wipe your running nose,[6] O roll the *beedis!*
The lord will demand *pan sopāri*,[7] but O roll the *beedis!*
Helpless, O roll the *beedis!*

Sweet drowsiness comes over me
And the cows eat the leaves left over;
The grocer[8] weighs with care, O roll the *beedis!*
If it weighs less, he cuts down payment. O roll the *beedis!*
Helpless, O roll the *beedis!*

He is a prince and I a princess[9] --
How can I unveil my face?
Yet I cover myself with the room.[10]
The sari is in shreds, and my heart torn. O roll the *beedis!*
Helpless, O roll the *beedis!*

Today the bright night is gay
And Kohli Kankudi is playing *rās*;[11]
I am also awake, but rolling *beedis*. O roll the *beedis!*
For food, clothes, and honor, O roll the *beedis!*
Helpless, O roll the *beedis!*

Cutting leaves I fall asleep,
In sleep the knife cuts my finger;
The fingertips are bruised rolling the thread; still
roll the *beedis!*
I cough, and breathe heavily. Still O roll the *beedis*
Helpless, O roll the *beedis!*

The "lord" eats sweetmeat,
And chewing betel leaves, one by one, spits;
But I spit blood.[12] Still, O roll the *beedis!*
And foment the aching chest. O roll the *beedis!*
Helpless, O roll the *beedis!*

Survey the marketplace
Replete with costly *ganjā, bhāng,* and tobacco.[13]
But cheap is the broken body of this woman,
And cheaper the blood of living beings!
Still, O roll the *beedis!*

Roll the *beedis*, roll the *beedis*, O roll the *beedis!*
Five hundred for twelve *paisā*, O roll the *beedis!*[14]

One does not notice any pseudo-romanticism here, nor the faked sentiment of the nineteenth-century romanticists for the noble savage or the oppressed multitude. For a time, India -- and Gujarat was no exception -- did, in its endeavor to rediscover its self, subjugate itself to this influence and did drape this with an overlay of Sanskrit classical learning. When this stupor was wearing out, Meghani appeared and obtained a glimpse of the mysteries and privileges of this pseudo-romanticism afforded by his university education; but this glamor never did touch his spirit, though according to Umashankar Joshi, this influence came "to an end roughly by about 1930-35."[15] In fact, what Joshi refers to as "the poet-1930 period that shows . . . the signs of modernism, namely, the tendency to divorce itself from the so-called realism and a sort of 'innerness', a zealous quest for the appropriate form and technique and in particular in search for the right word, the genuinely poetic language. . . ."[16] dawns on Meghani much earlier -- in 1916. The so-called realism (or pseudo-romanticism) of this period is also not noticeable in Meghani, neither is the idealistic vision referred to by Joshi.[17] As we shall see later, Meghani's concern for the underdog was a lifelong one sprouting from his infanthood; he was a "Gandhian" before Gandhi. The age of Marxism came about by 1930, and, in the words of Joshi again, gave "an edge to the sense of reality [and] . . . humanistic and progressive tendencies . . . [and] progressivism weaned the writers from romanticism . . . and the mill-chimney, the outcaste, and the prostitute were heavily leaned upon for poetic sustenance."[18] This movement does not influence Meghani for just poetic sustenance. Again, Meghani's concern for the poor, miserable, the oppressed workers and farmers does not stem from the new fashion of realism to which writers succumbed after 1930. He does not tinker with the little facts of life, does not return to the villages to escape into sentimentalism. It is not a faked concern for the little man, a concern for the sake of concern -- a poetic preoccupation. There is nothing in his autobiographical sketches scattered mostly through the prefaces to his folklore collections and creative writings, in his *Parkammā* and *Chellū prayāṇ*,[19] and nothing in the writings of his contemporaries to suggest even remotely that he fell a prey to any fad or fashion of the day. His ire is as genuine as the scalding vapors of a volcano.

In "Beedio vālo" Meghani does not imitate Thomas Hood as Umashankar Joshi did in his collection *Gangotrī*. The occupation of rolling handmade cigarettes -- stuffing strong tobacco into dried leaves cut for the purpose, then rolling the leaves to make a crude cigarette, and finally tying each *beedi* with a thin thread -- was both a "home craft" and a "trade craft." Those who could not afford to invest in raw materials such as tobacco, dried leaves, and the thread, worked for others -- the capitalist-minded who, still suffering from a poverty of sorts themselves, squeezed as much work from these destitute laborers as they could for a paltry sum. The strong, stinking tobacco was a bane -- it irritated the eyes and the nose and caused sores. Usually women did this work for a pittance, babysitting their own children as they worked. The babies contracted disease exposed to the harmful smell of the tobacco, but the mothers had to tend them with crude remedies while they rolled the *beedis*. As the dried leaves were cut for the *beedies*, it was not unusual for the women in their drowsiness to cut their fingers, which were also miserably bruised by the crude yarn used to secure each *beedi*. They worked day and night, sleeplessly, to earn a pittance and were paid not by the hour, but by the *weight* of the work produced. If there was a discrepancy between the weight of the raw materials and the finished product (a crude method of fixing the price), and if the discrepancy showed a loss in the weight of the finished *beedis*, the *beedi*-rollers were penalized by their pay being docked. Thus the suffering of these wretches was incalculable. And Meghani's feeling for their wretchedness is not a faked poetic sentiment, nor does he exploit this (or, for that matter, any other) lot of workers as substance for his poetic exercise. He had *seen* the sufferings of these and other wretches, felt their pains in himself and the resultant expression is poetry -- inevitable in its outburst in simple, forceful lines.

The Source of Meghani's Realism:

Born in 1896, of the "vermilion earth" Chotila, Saurashtra, the fourth of the eight children of a humble policeman, Kalidas Meghani, and the uncomplaining Dholiba, Jhaverchand Meghani was not destined to roll in luxury. He knew the pangs of poverty and suffering even as a child, as his father, the lowly policeman, was to be transferred from outpost to outpost. Meghani says:

> All these outposts -- Chok, Dadha, Chamardi, and Lakhapadar -- were in the *gir*-tree forest, some on the hills and some on the steep banks of dangerous and curvy ravines. The rock-piercing, deep-eddied waters, and lonesome, desolate caves were my constant childhood companions. The ghostly, howling mountain winds, whistling through the casements of our house perched on the precipice of the river bank, keeping me ever awake from my slumber, gave me the message of the heart of the mountains. I was the young and deeply delighted witness of the *ḍuhā* contests among the

> youthful cowherds gathered round the leaping flames of the Holi fire lit on the full-moon day of early spring -- nay, even of the old ones engaged in *duhā* battles. I was as much entranced by the Sorathi *duhās* of these mountaineers as I, the mountain lad, was delighted by the sweet fruits of those hills then.[20]

Again,

> The Lakhapadar outpost was situated at one of the entrances to the *gir*-tree forest. That was the cradle of my infanthood, untouched by civilization or culture. When an agency policeman was transferred to Lakhapadar, he would shudder with fright as he considered the transfer an exilement. The nearest railroad station was thrity miles away. Vegetables were scarce even for swearing. Its waters were saturated with poisonous roots of *gir* trees. A doctor and a school existed just in name. Its "brave" Kathi population was bereft of its very Kathi spirit. There were two-and-a-half businessman. The attraction that Lakhapadar -- which was used for punishing recalcitrant government servant -- held for my infant fancy was the opposite of that of others.[21]

As his parents moved from place to place, the education of the rustic boy was hampered. They decided to place him in the care of one Ram Shripal, a distant relative of Kalidas. Here Meghani's meal consisted of bits of millet bread and half a glass of generously adulterated buttermilk. This should give us an idea of the stinging poverty Meghani experienced when yet a child.

Until 1912 when he graduated from the high school at Amreli at the age of sixteen, he had seen and tasted the pain of low living all around him. While at college, unable to stand the cruel treatment meted out to the casteless untouchables by the other castes, Meghani and his college friend, Parmanand Joshi, broke many of the cultural taboos imposed on the relationship between the two classes and were promptly punished by "ostracization."[22] In fact, Meghani engaged himself in this social rebellion and reform long before Gandhi inaugurated his movement for the inclusion of the untouchables into the Hindu fold.

But Meghani realized that the people had accepted that life with resignation, and, having been conditioned by poverty, division, and lowliness for centuries, has forgotten that they were suffering at all! They had accepted it with a conditioned cheerfulness, accepted it as the will of God and the result of their own bad *karma* of the past. The last two notions were legacies inherited by them from an age-old past. People were immobilized, paralyzed, by this condition to such an extent that they had forgotten the

lowliness and the resultant misery as stemming from an unequal society. Mansukhlal Jhaveri brings this vexation of Meghani forcefully thus:

> [According to Meghani] in the contemporary social context "there is no right for the weaklings to survive"; then how can [anyone] stand the survival of the millions of poverty-stricken weaklings? Social injustice thus raises the fire of ire in the poet as he visualizes the army of these poor people holding the torch of fearlessness marching with rhythmic beats. Thus in the "Songs of the Oppressed," the social injustice stemming from economic inequality has been portrayed realistically. Though Meghani has genuine sympathy for the downtrodden and the poor, he does not conceal his bitterness for religious exploitation, the wealthy, and those exercising political power.[23]

Infuriated, Meghani's outburst against the lethargy of the suffering finds expression in these lines:

> Awake, O you feeble, hungry weaklings of the world!
> Dreadful Time stands on the altar of justice.
> Break the bonds of customs, open your eyes, blind ones!
> For the golden rays of the dawning sun are burgeoning.
>
> The tottering feet of the earth, by tears
> And blood are washed; and the army of oppressors is withdrawing;
> Awake, age-old slaves! Paradise is here;
> Dreadful Time stands on the altar of justice
> To punish the wicked; Dreadful Time has come.
>
> No need for prophets, nor for miserly gods;
> No need for a cowherd-like controller;
> Let all mankind, shattering lowly pride,
> Conjoin minds on this festive freedom!
> We shall wrench the loot of the looters
> And free the enslaved souls.
> Awake, O mankind, and challenge the foe.
> Dreadful Time stands on the altar of justice
> To punish the sinful; Dreadful Time has come.
>
> The web of power and the clutches of [unjust] laws
> Widen the noose for the innocent poor;
> The rich enjoy freely, but the red blood of the poor
> Is sucked by the devotees of power.
> We suffered slavery for a long time. Our life is enfeebled;
> We need a new life of brotherhood.
> Awake, awake, slaves, we have come home.
> Dreadful Time stands on the altar of justice
> To punish the killer; Dreadful Time has come.

Who shall inherit the world? The genuine hardworking,
Farmers, pounders, and the industrious.
Of those who have become fat drinking blood,
This is not the place;
The vain hawks feeding on other birds!
Think not that sun will not shine without you!
Awake! hardworking masses, give up your lethargy and misery!
Dreadful Time has come.[24]

In that frame of mind Meghani could not, as Jhaveri says,

> . . . pretend to enjoy and sing of the beauty of nature. The King of the seasons, *Fāgaṇ* [spring], is unable to draw the songs of delight from his heart. In that *Fāgaṇ* the poet sees the fire of destruction. As if this funeral pyre is not enough, Meghani invites the strongest bitterness of the fire of *Fāgaṇ*.[25]

There is searing anger smoldering within Meghani, and when it could be contained no longer, it erupted forth with fury, power, and glory:

Fāgaṇ has come, *Fāgaṇ* has come, O *Fāgaṇ* has come!
The King of Seasons has come, O *Fāgaṇ* has come!
Covered with flowers, colorful, and beautiful!
Bringing the sweet fragrance of the Nilgiri Mountains!
Thus falsely praised by poets
The burning *Fāgaṇ* has come.

Where is Spring? Where the chirpings?
Where the hum of the bees?
And where the love-whispers of the impassioned lovers?
He did not bring any of these!
But, instead, scorching, *Fāgaṇ* has come!

Where is the bower and where the cuckoo?
The water in the well and lakes is dried
And O love has dried up too.
O the great conflagration *Fāgaṇ* has come!

The temple-god rocks in his flower-swing;
Outside are mobs of hungry millions;
And cyclonic winds howl 'hoo, hoo!'
But Lord Shiva, the Dancer, has not come!
[Instead] The frightful *Fāgaṇ* has come!

Not the passionate *gopīs* dancing,
But the angry goddess, Kālī,
Dances her frightful dance.
O the destructive *Fāgaṇ* has come!
Instead of the happiness at the households of the city folks
Here appears the end of time.

Fāgaṇ has come, *Fāgaṇ* has come, O *Fāgaṇ* has come![26]

The arrival of the king of seasons, *Fāgaṇ*, which emblazons the earth with grandeur, cheer, and vibrant color, does not stir Meghani to ecstasy, for his eagle vision is fixed upon the sufferings of the poor, for they suffer all the time, spring or no spring.

One need only compare this poem with Shelley's and Keats' "Ode to the Spring" to image its grim vision. Shelley's "Ode to the West Wind" may come near it, but whereas Shelley identifies himself with the powerful wind, however destructive it may be, and ends with a prophecy and hope ("If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?"), Meghani dissociates himself from both the benevolence and the destruction of *Fāgaṇ*. The people do not and cannot see spring in spring. They have no time, no patience, no awareness, no gift to perceive spring, enmeshed as they are in their hunger, poverty, pain, and suffering.

A Fellow-Sufferer:

Gujarati critics are wont to dub Meghani affectionately as a popular poet. This seems to stem from the belief that, according to them, as Meghani resurrected the treasure of the folklore of Saurashtra and laid it on the lap of Gujarat, he meticulously peeled off the rough hide of the lore of the unsophisticated rustics, sprinkled it with the salt and pepper of his idealized vision, and garnished it with the relish of romanticism, so that folklore could become popular lore. If taken seriously, this view is tantamount to calling Meghani a fakelorist! These critics do not realize that Meghani's artistic vision, which was that of a hard-core realist, focussed on the lore of the folk hidden in the nooks of Saurashtra, not for resurrecting it from sinking into oblivion, nor for advertising its rustic splendor to the so-called educated eye, but partly to bring forward the untold, unheard of sufferings, pains, and poverty of the peasants and farmers, cowherds and cobblers, and latrine sweepers and tanners, revealed so poignantly in their folk songs and tales. This is not to say that it was Meghani's sole aim to reveal these sufferings. If it were so, he would have been a rank propagandist, championing the cause of the underdog, an ulterior motive which he never nourished. But the critics are vociferous in the enthusiastic downpour of their encomia on the yeomen "service" that Meghani rendered to the cause of literature of Gujarat. To them he was a folklorist because he was a fakelorist, a popularizer, keen on stirring on the passions and emotions of his audience, causing it to sway with fond approval. What these critics miss is that Meghani, folklorist first and then the realist-creative writer that he was, functioned not as a popularizer, but was, in fact, a fellow-sufferer, but with this difference: he also had the keen vision, enormous vitality, and abundant courage to portray the condition of the people in realistic terms. This following song would not have been created by a mere popularizer-romanticist-idealist, but by one bitten deeply by the contented, complascent, suffering multitude:

> Come *Vaishākhi* [summer] Forest Fire! O generous!
> And spread fire all around, O generous!

For some cool, shady place these poor children
Search for to protect themselves.
But this earth is small and they overflow.

Call forth the [wrath of] seven suns, O generous!
And burn every lead, O generous!
And spread a Sahara all over, O generous!
Come *Vaishākhi* Forest Fire! O generous!

How do these wretched millions yet survive
Drinking plenty of water, eating half a piece of bread?
Sleeping during cool nights on ground, with contentment?

Burn the coolness of the nights, O generous!
Pour forth rivers of lava all around, O generous!
Shake the mountains [of stupor and lethargy] with quakes, O generous!
Come *Vaishākhi* Forest Fire! O generous!

Still the poor woman veils her face,
Covers her child as she suckles him;
Patches her sari to cover her honor.

How come there is this surplus [of breast milk], O generous?
How come there is this luxury, O generous?
Circumspread a whirlwind of sandstorm, O generous!
Come *Vaishākhi* Forest Fire! O generous!

Yet Mother Earth does not devour her children!
Still white water [milk] drips from her breast,
Still her blood is red, O red!

Dry up this last nectar, O generous!
Turn topsy-turvy the order of nature, O generous!
Come *Vaishākhi* Forest Fire! O generous!

Intoxicated, mankind walks on barefeet;
Though it is searing noon, it delights in wilderness.
How do the skinny, bony feet still walk?

Bring them unbearable pain, O generous!
Consume the patience of the poor, O generous!
Reveal the wretchedness of God, O generous!
Come *Vaishākhi* Forest Fire! O generous!

Broadcast waterless draught, plague, and pox;
Spread unknown diseases among men, women, and children.
Cause death in each and every hearth!

The weaklings have no claim to live, O generous!
Sing songs for the fit to survive, O generous!
Save the world from congestion, O generous!
Colonize a few deserving ones, O generous!

Come *Vaishākhi* Forest Fire! O generous!
And spread fire all around, O generous![27]

Here the volcanic eruption within is unmistakable, but it is produced by the pang Meghani feels for the stupid, unthinking, idiotic contentment that he sees all around him among the poor and the downtrodden. Not that he longs for them to be decimated, but longs that their complascency be burnt so that from that conflagration may arise the phoenix of a new awareness.

Snapshots of Suffering:

Among Meghani's several poems those that find the fullest expression of his realistic ideas are included in his *Yugavandanā* which contains seventy-eight poems, out of which sixteen in the second section entitled "Snapshots of Suffering," form the kernel of Meghani's poetic outbursts against the inequality, indecency, injustice, and slavery of the underdog. These are poems of indignation, not just of one who was inspired by Marxist or any other realism. Some critics who do not hesitate to classify Meghani a rank romanticist say that in these poems the revolutionary Meghani dominates the poem Meghani, even at the expense of the capitalists! Most of these poems concern lowly workers in various walks of life, such as laborers, farmers, prisoners, cowherds, *beedi* rollers, and the like, and their suffering. The general impression one obtains from a study of these poems is that of the cruel cleavage that exists between the two classes -- the "Haves" and the "Have-Nots." Whereas the former get richer by doing nothing or less, the latter get poorer by working harder, in which process, ironically enough, the rich are made richer still. As we noticed earlier, Meghani is indignant that the poor do not realize that their lot is fastened upon them by an unequal society, by a few rich and powerful men who maintain the status quo to preserve and enrich their own interests at the expense of the millions of workers; on the contrary the latter accept their condition with resignation, as the will of God and the result of their own *karma* of a former life. Consequently, they do not mind living on half a slice of bread and plenty of water with patches of rags for clothing, and sleeping on the bare, cow-dung-plastered floors. Meghani's bitterness is directed as much at these wretches for their unthinking acceptance of their lot as at the rich exploiters who live on the poverty and wretchedness of the workers. He does not hesitate to denigrate them for their sloth. The blackening is intended in their interests, to awaken them to the reality of the situation.

The one prominent vision that cuts through all these, and that heavily underscores them, is like that of the observer in Baudelaire's "Everyone His Own Chimera,"[28] where, at the end of the poem, the observer himself feels the chimera creeping in on him. The millions of poor people who had taken the burden of their suffering for granted, who were uncomplaining, who had

accepted the chimera as an inveitable God-sent burden -- however vampire-like it may suck the blood from their very souls -- are not something just to be pitied from a distance, just as the noble savage was in the West by the nineteenth-century romanticists. Instead, the poet feels that even though they themselves were so immobilized by the burden of a hoary, unquestionable past, they should, nevertheless, rise in revolt. In these poems one unerringly sees the creative genius of Meghani merging unobtrusively with the white heat of intellectual vigor.

Folkness of Meghani's Poems: Their Singability.

Meghani composed his poems explicitly for singing. He gives the *rāga*, or tune, for each song and composed them as he sang. The tune and singing are simple, instantly graspable and singable by ordinary folks. He enjoyed singing his songs and enjoyed the people singing them. Mansukhlal Jhaveri says, in contrasting the poetry of Meghani with that of his younger contemporaries, Umashankar Joshi and Sundaram, that the latter are characterized by their intellectualism, their tendency to philosophize and generalize, whereas Meghani's poetry has the eternal charm of the rustic lyricism and adheres to the direct, simple, concrete emotions. He adds that there is "modernity" in all of them, in as much as they direct their attention to the problems of the day and move from the particular to the universal.[29] This is much more so of Meghani than the others, for in Joshi and Sundaram, one witnesses a flight from abstraction to abstraction, but in Meghani one moves from one concrete experience to another, a slow, deliberate, rise to a valid generalization, and thence to a universalization, as we have seen in the lyric on the *beedi* rollers. The modernity of the younger poets finds expression in sometimes Sanskritized and sometimes archaic, phrases. It is as if the endeavor is for expression for expression's sake, where, in the battle for fine, choosey words, one vital element is lost: singability. In Meghani this quality is of paramount importance. As noted previously, the musicality of Meghani's poetry is intended as much for the creator's enjoyment and reader's pleasure, for the millions of common people whose interest in "poetry" in in its singability. It is precisely for this reason that Meghani uses the simple diction of the common man -- whether he made this a principle to abide by, like Wordsworth, or not, we do not know. Consequently, the one balladistic technique that one frequently comes across in Meghani's poetry is the repetition of words, phrases, and lines -- the burden or the refrain. Ballad critics are of common consent concerning the function of this technique: repetition is, among other things, a cue for the audience to "join in" at the appropriate moment and also instantly aids the memory of the singer about what he has to pass on to next.

The foregoing touches not even a tenth part of Meghani's poetry. Not all his poems deal with the condition of the underdog. Some were composed while he was "in love" with Gandhism, and a few in this category became well known in Gujarat. Several of his verses are translations and many are adaptations. In all these, including those that sing about the oppressed, the predominant sentiment in compassion. And the one quality of Meghani that everyone in Gujarat is unanimous about is his compassion, especially for the underprivileged. Even though only a handful of his poems deal with this class, they represent his best.

FOOTNOTES

1. Quoted by Jayant Pathak and Jayant Patel in *Meghāni: jivan ane sāhitya* (Surat: Popular Prakashan, 1968), p. 14. *Navaras* literally means the nine extracts or essences; or, technically, the nine sentiments or emotions in Sanskrit poetry. It also means new interest or new life. *Navaras* is sometimes substituted for *sabaras* (essence of all), or salt, for in India salt is an essential ingredient in food and symbolically stands for food. On the Gujarati New Year's Day, salt is to be offered and taken. Meghani uses the word *navaras* to mean several things at once: the essence of life, the beginning of life, all the sentiments, and all life. All the translations in this paper are by this writer who accepts the responsibility for the blemishes in them.

2. Umashankar Joshi, *Abhiruchi* (Bombay: Vora & Co., 1959), p. 253.

3. Jhaverchand Meghani, *Yugavandanā*, 6th ed. (Ahmedabad: Gujar Grantharatna Karyalaya, 1967), p. 190. This volume first appeared in 1935.

4. Umashankar Joshi, "Dhobi," *Gangotrī*, 5th ed. (Ahmedabad: Gujar Grantharatna Karyalaya, 1963), p. 136ff.

5. Her eyes are afire not only because she is tired but also because of the emanation from the strong, dry tobacco.

6. The strong, dry tobacco also causes the nose to run.

7. *Pān sopāri* is a mixture of betel leaves and arica nuts rolled together with a bit of lime powder and certain other spices; it is used as a mouth freshener. Some people also chew tobacco in it.

8. Here the grocer is the "lord," the term intended derogatorily; grocers are known for their stinginess in weighing groceries and for their cheating.

9. Here Meghani refers to the plight of the once-rich and proud Kathis, the ruling clan of Kathiavad, or Saurashtra.

10. While it is the custom for Indian women to cover their faces before elders and strangers, the "unveiling" here refers to the scarcity of cloth, which does not allow her the privilege of veiling or unveiling. In the absence of any fabric the woman uses the four walls of the room as her clothing (the woman, it should be noted, is not totally naked, though Meghani depicts her as if she were so destitute that she has practically no clothing at all). The use of the four walls as clothing draws upon the myth of Shiva, the naked god, who uses the four directions as his clothing.

11. *Rās* is a folk dance of North India, especially in Gujarat. Kohli Kankudi is the name of a girl, any girl, as with Jane Doe.

12. The chewing of *pān* makes the saliva in the mouth red; this red-colored saliva is often then spat out indiscriminantly everywhere.

13. *Ganjā* and *bhāng* are both narcotics and are illegal to use; however, it is not difficult to obtain them in the open market.

14. Meghani, *Yugavandanā*, p. 94. In a note to this poem (see p. 203), Meghani says that Thomas Hood's "Song of the Shirt" inspired him to compose this poem, though he avers that there is nothing in common between the two. It is interesting to observe that Umashankar Joshi translated Hood's poem and that his own poem, "The Song of the Hammer," was written in the same vein.

15. Umashankar Joshi, "Modernism in Indian Literature," *Indian Literature*, I, 2 (April-September, 1958), p. 22.

16. *Ibid.*

17. *Ibid.*, p. 23.

18. *Ibid.*

19. *Parkammā* (Bombay: Bharati Sahitya Sangh, 1946); Chellu *prayāṇ* (Bombay: Bharatiya Sahitya Sangh, 1947).

20. *Duhā* literally means "couplet"; traditionally a *duhā* contest is a type of party game where two opposing groups of singers are pitted one against the other in songs in the *duhā*, or couplet, form. Holi is a festival which honors the end of winter and the start of spring; at the celebration for this holiday, firewood and other combustible materials are burned to usher in the spring season.

21. Meghani, *Sorathi geet kathao* (Ranpur: Saurashtra Karyalaya, 1931), p. 5.

22. Niranjan Varma and Jaimalla Parmar, *Jhaverchand meghāṇi: smaraṇāñjali* (Ranpur: Fulchhab Prakashan Mandir, 1947), p. 39.

23. Mansukhlal Jhaveri in *Meghāṇi granth*, ed. Umashankar Joshi (Bhavnagar: Sanskar Sahitya Mandir, 1971), p. 6.

24. Meghani, *Yugavandanā*, p. 80ff.

25. Jhaveri, p. 276.

26. Meghani, *Yugavandanā*, p. 75.

27. *Ibid.*, p. 77.

28. Quoted in *Literature for Composition*, ed. J. R. Kreuzer and Lee Cogan (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1965), p. 302.

29. Mansukhlal Jhaveri in *Meghāṇi granth*, p. 276.

ASPECTS OF THE SOCIALIST REALIST VERSE OF SUNDARAM AND UMASHANKAR JOSHI

Panna Naik

University of Pennsylvania

Gujarati literature, I do not think, differs very much from any other Indian literature in the way its writers responded to Marxist thought and practice.[1] Though one can see a certain degree of social awareness in the literature prior to 1930 -- subsequent to the general renaissance of the late-nineteenth century -- one has to wait until after 1930 for a full-fledged and varied expression of it in Gujarati writing. However, the point to remember is that Marxism in Gujarati literature is part of the over-all social awareness which itself was new to traditional India.

The Progressive Movement, as Socialist Realist literature came to be called, was a response to the complex of intellectual and social forces that pressed in on the writer of the 30s and the 40s. There was Gandhi with his call for independence and reform of religion; he seemed to be making a synthesis of the old and the new. There was the 1917 Russian Revolution, and the resultant generalized Marxist thought being publicized by important Indian political activists such as M. N. Roy. There was the revival of interest in ancient arts which had been triggered off by resurgent national consciousness. Finally there was the carry-over from the influence of the English romantic poets. The writer had to come to terms with these and other existential forces which were at times strongly contradictory. For instance, the newly-felt Indian identity meant relating to what was essentially a "personal literature" tradition with its emphasis on the philosophical, spiritual and the psychological, whereas social awareness suggested a strong commitment to causes. Consequent to the complex forces in operation, there is no clarity about the way in which the Gujarati writer of the period achieved any kind of synthesis.

Most writers seem to have drifted with vague impulses and affiliations. However, one can roughly divide the writers of this period into three rough categories: (1) those who became ideologically committed to the radicalism of Socialist thought and dogma; (2) those who were satisfied with a mild expression of indignation at social injustice and exploitation -- these perhaps were reformers of the Gandhian mold and not radicals; and (3) those who refused to be drawn out of their ivory tower of "art for art's sake" and remained personal lyrical writers.[2]

Though Marxism is better handled, at any rate, more readily treated, in prose and drama, I am going to talk only about poetry in this short synopsis, and I believe my conclusions apply generally to prose and drama as well. A strong reason for my confining to poetry in this paper is that it is fascinating as a form in terms of its encounter with politics and political thought. After all, it has been the most personal of art forms and, therefore, offers the severest challenge to the poet that he express his social concerns or political dogma without losing his integrity as an artist.

Gujarati poets of the 1930s and 1940s for the most part, made tentative syntheses of the various influences I have already mentioned. In most cases, these did not amount to a massive political or ideological vision. I shall use a few specific poems from Sundaram and Umashankar Joshi to examine how the poets of this era succeeded or failed in their efforts at making their poetry inclusive of their new-found political awareness.

Tribhuvandas Luhar, whose pen name is Sundaram, was born in 1908 in Mia Matar, Broach District. He was educated at Gujarat Vidyapith and has published five collections of poems, several of short stories, some travelogue pieces and criticism. Since 1945 he has been living at the Sri Aurobindo Ashram in Pondicherry. He has edited the bimonthly journal *Sabarmatī* and is currently editing *Dakshiṇā* (Right, or South), a quarterly devoted to Aurobindo's philosophy. Sundaram's current believe is that of Aurobindo: "All life is yoga." Sundaram has received prizes for two of his collections: *Kāvyamangalā* (Auspicious Poetry; 1933) and *Yātrā* (Journey; 1951).

The sentiments that are more or less common to most poetry of social comment of this era are righteous indignation at exploitation, and sympathy for the downtrodden, semi-starved and underprivileged. Sundaram describes this conflict between the rich and the poor, the rulers and the ruled with passionate sentiment in favor of the latter, though generally without any doctrinal vehemence. *Kāvyamangalā, Koyā bhagatnī kaḍvī vaṇī ane garībonā geeto* (Koya Bhagat's Plain Speaking and Songs of the Poor; 1933), and *Vasudhā* (Earth; 1939) -- these three collections of poetry were all published in the 1930s during Sundaram's Socialist phase; selected poems from these works will be dealt with in the following section on Sundaram.

In "Tran padoshī"[3] (Three Neighbors), an undistinguished narrative poem, the poet compares God Rama, the present-day businessman, and the poor working woman, Makor. They live in the same block, but what each possesses indicates the existing inequalities and injustices. The businessman has a gorgeous palace, Rama, his illuminated temple, and Makor, a filthy hovel. On a festival day, the first two enjoy a good meal, but Makor has to keep grinding her meager grain to earn a penny in spite of her illness. The poem ends with Makor's death when nobody except a crow is present.

What is significant here thematically is that Sundaram is dissenting from the mainstream of the new political renaissance led by Gandhi to whom Rama was the ideal king. The rejection of the *Rāmāyaṇa* coming along with that of the selfish, greedy businessman underlines Sundaram's leftist concern. The poem has, besides the radical rejection of Rama, a moving passage about the forlorn death of the working woman. The crow which keeps the old woman company at her death, of course, has special implications, as this bird is associated in India with the dead and the cermony of the dead. The following passage is perhaps the least unsuccessful in the rather long poem of sixty lines:

> The businessman smiles self-satisfied in his eight-story mansion
> And Rama romances with Sita in his sanctum
> As cymbals play and people celebrate at the businessman's;
> Meanwhile Makor falls unconscious
> And dies to the music of the grindstone;
> A lonely crow stands around sighing.

In spite of the willed confluence of the three figures and the contrived convergence of events in the last climactic stanza, the lines do have some impact on the reader.

In "Bhangadi"[4] (Untouchable Woman), Sundaram presents a situation with sarcastic undertones, but without any doctrinal preaching. He brings out the desperate lot of an untouchable woman in contrast to the easy affluence of a rich lady, using his characteristic method of parallel situations. The untouchable woman is too poor to have good saris and ornaments. She is marrying off her son and dreams of having a ceremonial procession in celebration. There is mention in the poem of another procession which did take place just a week before and in which the whole town got together to cremate the other woman of the poem, the wife of a businessman. The *cundadī*[5] which was spread on the dead woman's body is taken off and given to the untouchable woman. The poet says in the last lines that while the rich woman wears her *cundadī* to her cremation, the untouchable can never hope to have such a sari unless it be a gift given on such occasions as death or marriage. The poem is in a sense characteristic of Sundaram's poetry -- it is full of egalitarian sentimentality, but not much else. Not a single passage is imaginative and, therefore, the poem remains ineffective.

In "Amdāvādnā shahermā"[6] (In the City of Ahmedabad), the poet treats the theme of the capitalist class versus the working class. This rather conspicuously Socialist poem concretizes the disappearing villages and the growing cities in the wake of the industrial revolution. The evils inherent in this new society -- exploitation, injustice, poverty, etc. -- are brought out. Mill owners in Ahmedabad run hundreds of textile mills, but the laborers and villagers of India do not have even rags to wear. The city now has concrete roads and the mill owners own cars which have come to replace feudalistic horses. It is, in the poet's words, not Gandhi's conception of *Rāma-rājya* (the just kingdom of Rama), but Rama's prison. The thrust of the poem is that the feudalistic society is becoming industrial, but with absolutely no change in the condition of the working class or the ruled. The poem is highly schemetized and, therefore, remains somewhat weak in its impact. The poet's first impulse seems to be potentially creative, but is the product a fully realized poem? The description of the city with its busy restaurants and factories is reasonably successful but shows clearly how the poet's imagination is too limited to exploit the explosive idea of contrast between the ideal and the real. Let us look at the way in which the poet conveys the idea that change, in terms of modernization, is limited to surface appearance and does not emcompass the quality of life of millions of poor Indians:

> In the city of Ahmedabad, cars cross the bridge over
> the Sabarmati River;
> On the Island of Andaman, Rama's prison,
> Man replaces oxen in oil production;
> Cars run on tar roads
> And each has the power of twenty horses;
> In Rama's prison man is a slave to oil production.
> And each man equals four oxen.

One notices that Sundaram's chief preoccupation is the debunking of Rama, a Gandhian symbol of Indian renaissance and resurgence. Rama is a recurrent theme in his poetry. However, one wishes that the poet had exploited the subtle possibilities of the insight that revival of *Rāma-rājya* is perhaps an illusion, and that if and when it should occur, it might turn out to be the most reactionary kingdom on earth.

These poems I have referred to are not totally ineffective because the poet's genuine passion is sometimes made vivid through images of suffering. Their partial success is also because the poet uses the traditional structure of the *bhajan*, a particular type of religious song, and thereby avoids straight propaganda and achieves some emotional involvement on the part of the reader. Unfortunately, the affective dimension inherent in the *bhajan* form cannot be communicated in translation.

However, in some of his other poems, Sundaram's political view is more pronounced because he becomes an advocate of the cause of the poor and a believer in revolution. For instance in "Footpathnā sunār"[7] (Pavement Dwellers), we have a diatribe against the rich class who have produced the pavement dwellers. The poem is a series of obvious rhetorical statements about justice and thus lacks artistic indirection. It does have, however, a passionate affirmative cry of revolution that "the fire of poverty will engulf the jungle of the cities, and mansion-dwellers will be roasted as bitter songs will be hummed and sweet dreams are broken." "Motorno hanknār"[8] (The Chauffeur) reads like propaganda. The statement that the chauffeur is wearing himself out as the tires of the car is less than satisfactory as a vehicle to communicate either the poet's political ideas or his feeling of compassion. It is interesting to note that Sundaram turned progressively to religion as the decade of the 1930s came to an end, and finally entered the Aurobindo Ashram at Pondicherry in 1945.

Umashankar Joshi is a more significant poet who, for a brief period, was clearly leftist is his views. He was born in the village of Bamna, Sabarkantha District, in 1911. He was educated at Bombay University and started writing at the age of seventeen. These earlier writings are deeply influenced by Gandhi, Socialist thought and the atmosphere of the nationalist upsurge during the 1920s and 1930s. Joshi was one of the writers chiefly responsible for stimulating socio-political thinking among Gujarati intellectuals and artists. He has published eight collections of poems, several plays, critical essays, short stories, and a novel, as well as numerous translations. He has been editing the literary monthly *Saṃskṛiti* (Culture) since 1947. He has received awards for his poetry, including a medals for *Gangotrī* (The Ganges' Source; 1934) and *Nishīth* (Midnight; 1939). *Nishīth* also shared the Bharatiya Jnanpith Prize in 1969, this award being one of the highest offered throughout India. A recent issue of the *Journal of South Asian Literature* (formerly *Mahfil*) was devoted to his writings.[9]

To begin this discussion of Joshi, I should start by quoting two passages concerning his new socio-political awareness with the hope that they would throw some light on the entire leftist phenomenon of which Joshi himself was a leading spokesman. The first one is a bit of personal reminiscence and the second is a statement of purpose.

> I was one of the pioneers of the Progressive Movement in Indian literature. I vividly recall the preliminary meeting held in the office of a Gujarati daily in Bombay. A top Communist leader was present. When Gorky died we took out a procession in Bombay. I approached the famous poetess and national leader, Mrs. Sarojini Naidu, to address the rally, which she did. All this was also intended as an affront to the foreign rulers and as a means of enhancing social consciousness among the writers.[10]

and:

> Progressivism weaned the writers from romanticism and for a time the kokil, the moon, and the stars were tabooed and the mill-chimney, the outcaste and the prostitute were heavily leaned upon for poetic sustenance.[11]

The phrases "weaned from" and "leaned upon", perhaps underline the change from the romantic to the realistic -- Progressive. It was not mother's milk, Joshi contends, which was going to sustain the poet, but rather society, its harsh realities and the need for change. Let us look at some of Joshi's own contribution to the literature under question.

Two of Joshi's several collections, *Gangotrī* and *Nishīth*, published in 1934 and 1939 respectively, offer us poetry of conspicuous social concern, comment and commitment. As a matter of fact, poetry written after *Nishīth* shows Joshi's growing capacity for assimilating societal activities into a larger vision of man and his world; he, it seems, does not have to write poems singularly Socialist Realist in nature. First, let us look at a few poems from *Gangotrī*.

"Daḷaṇānā dānā"[12] (Grains for Grinding) shows a very important dimension of Joshi's poetic practice, namely, the influence of folklore. It uses the parable style and strikingly colloquial vocabulary. The victim-character of "Daḷaṇānā dānā" is an old woman of sixty who "emptied the jar for sixty years of a grinding life, but her stomach-jar was not to be filled." The poem lists all the misfortunes that have happened to her. A squirrel, a cow, a dog, a cat and pigeons -- everyone is after her grain, and to add to her sorrow, her son dies of plague. The poem ends with the frustrated cry of the old woman:

> Throw what is left of the grain to the birds on my behalf
> Break the jar, make a fire
> Sell the house for funeral rites.

The poem becomes progressively sentimental losing a sense of reality in the process. However, the use of colloquial Gujarati -- *bundhe* (at the bottom), *khaludī* (squirrel), and *mendi* (bent horn) -- saves the poem from becoming utterly melodramatic. One notices Josh's adequate creative capacity to integrate the new subjects of social realities with the still alive traditional folk forms.

"Jatharāgni"[13] (The Stomach-Fire), another poem about victims has an interesting central image. The poet warns the oppressors and exploiters that the fire of hunger in the empty stomach of the hungry would burst into conflagration, reducing all their palaces and gardens to ashes without leaving a trace. However, the poet does not do much with this at all. The image gets lost in a string of generalities about exploitation, especially when one thinks of the possibilities of the central metaphor of "Jatharāgni." The poem is significant because it shows Joshi's inspirational imagination at work, though not in a sustained way through the poem.

At his worst, Joshi, like Sundaram, indulges in weak sentimental rhetoric. For instance "Gulam"[14] (Slave):

> I, a slave
> Man -- invaluable flower of the earth, a slave?
>
> Flowers bloom freely
> Trees shake their branches without being stopped
> Rivers flow, winds blow without any control
> No one obstructs;
>
> The ocean keeps on singing
> No one stops its music
> All of nature is free
> Why should man alone be a slave?

The poem moves in a predictable pattern cataloging nothing that is not obvious. There is hardly any of the freshness of discovery that is essential to good poetry.

A piece called "Dhobī"[15] (Washerman) is about the washerman, a popular figure in India. In a sentimental vein, this Wordsworthian dialogue-poem presents a poet and a scientist encountering a poor washerman. In the course of the conversation that ensues, the scientist instructs the washerman about the spectrum of colors, and the poet preaches enjoyment of beauty. The hard-working washerman has no time for either science or poetry because for him work is simply a question of survival. The poem's pronounced didacticism detracts from what might have been a work projecting the fundamental paradoxes of human life. The varied potentialities and needs of man, who is both an animal and something more than an animal, come under a rather rigid scale of values to which Joshi seems to be committed during this period of his creative life.

Nishīth, the second collection of Joshi's poetry with which we are concerned, already shows the poet's waning interest in socio-political-economic issues as such; only six of a total of 116 poems have a distinctive Socialist Realist orientation, and social concern over-all is less demonstrable.

"Gunder viṇanār"[16] (Gum Collector) is about laborers whose lives are entirely devoted to gum collecting. The poet's sympathy is unmistakably for the gum collector, whose work the poet compares to "the squeezing of his frozen blood." However this central image of the poem is largely left unexploited.

"Anna brahma"[17] (*Brahman* as Food or Materiality) is perhaps one of the most interesting poems in Joshi's cannon, because it attempts to place the poet's Socialist sympathy in an Upanishadic framework. It alludes to the theory of the five forms of the reality of the *brahman* and implies that the sould or spirit of man has to go through the stage of *anna* (matter or food) in its journey towards the *brahman* -- the ultimate reality. The poet's exploratory attempt at synthesizing his societal concern and his traditional heritage is appreciable. However, the poem seems to end in some sort of intellectual confusion. It asserts in conclusion that the exploiters of *anna* (food) will, in turn, be exploited by *anna*, meaning presumably, materialism. The point is that the poem creates some confusion in at once justifying and rejecting "materialism" in the philosophical sense. One cannot however miss the ambitious nature of Joshi's attempt and his reasonable success.

One can see that Joshi in his very choice of themes and structures shows a superior sensibility to that of Sundaram. However, one must admit that even he, sometimes in a whole poem, or the times, in certain sections of a poem, places idea or ideology before life and loses some of his poetic effectiveness.

It seems that the leftist-minded poets of this era succeed whenever they make their political thought subserve a traditional structure -- folk or classical. The structure seems to carry the burden of politics well. Also the influence of Marxism in neither very sustained nor very deep, capable of producing an overpowering profound vision. Furthermore, Gandhi's non-violent reformism and Indian spirituality and Eliot's poetic practice seem to have overcome within a short period whatever Marxist commitment there was in these poets. Joshi himself has put this phenomenon in perspective in a recent interview published in the *Journal of South Asian Literature:*

> . . . as the decade came to a close, we rang down the curtain on progressivism, though not before we had produced two volumes of *Sāhitya ane pragati* ("literature and progressivism") in Gujarati. I had by then moved to Ahmedabad. It was not a question of my or anybody else's disassociating myself or himself from the Progressive Movement. It was a corporate decision, with a communist writer friend also participating in it. We all thought that the movement had served its purpose. With the starting of World War II, there was a shift in interests. Again, what with our predilection for more thought-stuff as demanded by Professor Thakore and what with our pre-occupation with progressive material, some of us turned out indifferent essays in verse, devoid of esthetic interest. There was a sharp reaction from younger writers.

Prahlad Parekh's *Bārī bahār* ("across the window"; 1940) steers clear of any reference to contemporary problems. In my preface to the book, I showed how compelling Prahlad's poetic voice was. So, the pendulum has swing back in the other direction, leaving us, the progressives, high and dry, as it were.[18]

FOOTNOTES

1. As in other regional literatures at this point of time, there was an organized effort at articulating leftist philosphy in manifestoes. See the appendix of this paper for the text of the 1936 Gujarati Writers' Association Manifesto. Cf. the versions of the All India Progressive Writers' Association manifesto discussed by Carlo Coppola on pp. 1-34.

2. There are several poets, playwrights, essayists and novelists who fall into the first two categories. Unfortunately an adequate bibliography of these writers is not available to me to provide the reader with a useful listing.

3. *Kāvyamangalā*, 5th ed. (Bombay: R. R. Sheth), pp. 68-70.

4. *Ibid.*, pp. 55-56.

5. *Candaḍī* is a tie-and-dye sari, which is supposed to be very auspicious and generally worn at the time of a wedding.

6. *Koyā bhagatnī kaḍvī vāṇī ane garībonā geeto*, 2nd ed. (Bombay: R. R. Sheth, 1967), pp. 77-78.

7. *Vasudhā* (Bombay: R. R. Sheth, 1939), pp. 82-85.

8. *Ibid.*, pp. 97-98.

9. *Journal of South Asian Literature* (hereafter *JSAL*), IX, 1 (Spring 1973); this issue contains an extended interview with Umashankar Joshi, his acceptance speech for the 1968 Bharatiya Jnanpith Award, translations of forty-five poems, and two articles: "Umashankar Joshi: A Search for Synthesis" by me, and "An Introduction to the Poetry of Umashankar Joshi" by M. V. Desai.

10. Interview with Umashankar Joshi, *JSAL*, p. 5.

11. Umashankar Joshi, "Modernism in Indian Literature," *Indian Literature*, II, 2 (April-September 1958), p. 23.

12. *Gangotrī*, 5th ed. (Ahmedabad: Gujar Granthratna Karyalay, 1963), pp. 62-63.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 27. A translation of this poem under the title "The Fire of Hunger" appears in the Joshi Number *JSAL*, p. 32.

14. *Ibid.*, p. 5. Another translation of this poem appears in the Joshi Number *JSAL*, p. 30.

15. *Ibid.*,pp. 85-86. A translation of this poem by the author in the Joshi Number *JSAL*, pp. 37-38.

16. *Nishīth*, 3rd ed. (Bombay: Vora, 1962), pp. 101-102.

17. *Ibid.*, pp. 125-27.

18. Interview with Umashankar Joshi, *JSAL*, p. 5.

APPENDIX

1936 GUJARATI PROGRESSIVE WRITERS' ASSOCIATION MANIFESTO

Great changes are taking place in Indian society. Old ideas and beliefs are decaying and a new social order is coming into existence. It is the duty of Indian writers to express in words these revolutionary changes and help the Indian people to advance in the Progressive direction.

One of the characteristics of Indian literature has been its escapism from the realities of life and taking refuge in mysticism and false spirituality. As a result it has become puerile and lifeless, both in form and content and devoid of reason and rationality.

The aim of our association is to rescue our literature and other arts from the domination of the reactionary classes and bring them into closest contact with the people, to infuse life and reality into them and to show to the people the path to the bright future for which mankind is struggling in our epoch.

While striving to preserve the noble traditions of Indian culture, we shall mercilessly criticize the decadent tendencies in our society. We shall express all those feelings and ideas which show to our people the way to a new and better life. In this task we shall benefit from our own and other countries' culture. We want the new literature of India to deal with basic problems of life. These are the problems of hunger and poverty, our social backwardness and our political subjugation.

All that arouses in us the spirit of rationality, which helps us to examine old beliefs and customs in the light of reason, which gives us the strength to act and to organize, we accept as Progressive.

The aims of our association are:

(1) To unite and form associations of Progressive writers of all Indian languages and to spread our ideas through publishing Progressive literature;

(2) To struggle against reactionary forces and tendencies and to help the freedom struggle of our people;

(3) To give material and moral help to Progressive writers;

(4) To protect the right of free expression of thought and ideas.

SOCIALIST REALISM AND HINDI NOVELS*

Yogendra K. Malik

University of Akron

The tradition of Socialist Realism in Hindi novels is not very old. Even in 1936, when the Communist-inspired first All-India Progressive Writers' Association (AIPWA) conference was organized, few outstanding Hindi novelists, except Munshi Prem Chand, attended it. The reason for the absence of Hindi novelists from the conference was not simply, as Hafiz Malik suggests, that it was organized by Sajjad Zaheer and other left-wing Urdu writers.[1] Actually, literary traditions in Hindi, up to the end of the 1930s, were dominated by Hindu revivalism, nationalism and romanticism. The concept of "Socialist Realism," which advocated egalitarianism, and was based upon Marx's theory of dialectical materialism and economic determinism, was unacceptable to the leading Hindi authors, who came from orthodox upper-caste Hindu families. It was looked upon as an alien philosophy unlikely to suit the conditions of the Indian society.[2] This resistance of the established Hindi authors and critics to Marxist writings stemmed the growth of novels in Hindi based upon Socialist Realism.

It was only in the late 1940s that many young Hindi novelists started publishing their works, which either represented a Marxist interpretation of the Indian situation or dealt with subjects which were considered "Progressive" by the Communist Party of India. It was this group of authors which subsequently became affiliated with the AIPWA.

It must be understood, however, that not all the novelists termed "Progressive" by the AIPWA, the group leading the Marxist literary movement in India, are Marxists, and they did not all follow the policy lines laid down by the Communist Party of India. We find, therefore, two distinct groups among the Progressive novelists in Hindi. One such group of novelists includes Munshi Prem Chand,[3] Upendranath Ashk, Yagya Dutta Sharma and Amritlal Nagar[4] and others who have depicted the problems of hunger and poverty, exploitation of the peasants by the rich landlords, the evil results of casteism and the Hindi family system, the frustrations of the urban middle classes and the general social backwardness of the country. Their writings could meet the standards of "purposeful art," but could hardly measure up to the standards of "Socialist Realism." None of these authors believed in the complete "subordination of the arts to the political objectives"[5] set by the Communist Party leadership at the national or international level or by the Marxist literary critics.

---

*I am glad to record my thanks to Professor Carl Lieberman for his valuable help in editing the paper. I am also grateful to Professor Leonard Fleischer for his comments which have been helpful in the revisions of the original draft.

The second group of Progressive novelists, however, followed a distinct partisan line and interpreted the various aspects of social and political life in India on the basis of doctrinaire Marxism. Most of the novelists belonging to this group were either active Communist party functionaries or regular party members. Whatever the nature of their relationship with the Communist Party of India, most of the novelists belonging to this group have never long deviated knowingly either from its policies or from the ideological goals set by the international Communist movement. In this paper, we are primarily concerned with the novelists affiliated with this group.

The paper consists of three parts. In the first part, I will briefly describe the works and lives of the leading Marxist novelists of Hindi, and in the second part, I will focus on their portrayal of the positive heroes as models of political behavior and their concept of negative heroes as embodiments of evil. We will also be concerned with the expression of their political beliefs and values, their perception of the nationalist movement, and their attitude towards the existing political system in India. Finally, I shall make an assessment of the Marxist writings in Hindi in light of the political culture in India.

(1)

Leading Marxist Novelists

The tradition of Socialist Realism in Hindi novels starts with Rameshvar Shukla "Ancal," a poet turned novelist. Ancal has been termed basically a romantic poet, who, like many intellectuals, was attracted to Marxism and Marxian ideals of a classless and stateless society. His conversion to Marxism was an emotional experience, rather than the result of a rational choice. Of his three novels, only *Carntī dhūp* (1945) describes the struggle of peasants, farmers and the working class. In this novel he denounces Gandhism and its stress on peaceful transformation of the society through non-violence. Instead, he advocates revolution and class warfare. Following the Marxist lines, Ancal stresses that peace and prosperity are possible only in a society founded after the proletarian revolution. In his second novel, *Nayī imārat* (1947), he unsuccessfully tries to justify the role of the Communist Party of India, which in 1942 co-operated with the British Government and supported its war efforts, opposing the call of the Congress Party and Gandhi for non-cooperation until India was granted complete independence.

His third novel, *Ulkā*, is a story of the middle-class Hindu joint family system. It is mixed with occasional Marxian jargon, but devoid of any deep analysis either of Hindu society or of its belief system. The novel is full of shallow sentimentalism and romanticism,[6] which can hardly fit the mold of Socialist Realism.

Yashpal, who comes from a lower middle-class Punjab Hindu family, is perhaps the most outstanding Marxist novelist in Hindi. Yashpal was brought up in the Arya Samajist (the reformist sect of Hinduism) environment and was educated in the National College of Lahore. He was originally associated with

a revolutionary group, the Indian Democratic Socialist Army, which, while not advocating a clear-cut Marxist program, sought the establishment of a peasant's and worker's government in a free India.[7] It was during his numerous imprisonments that Yashpal studied and absorbed Marxist ideas and became sympathetic to the Communist Party of India. Yashpal is the author of more than a dozen novels,[8] numerous short stories and a three-volume autobiographical history of the revolutionary movement in India. Yashpal's writings picture the contradictions of the life of the North Indian middle class. Most of his characters come from the disillusioned youth of the urban middle class, who become involved with the labor movement and at one or the other stages of their lives find satisfaction within the fold of the Communist Party. Unlike Prem Chand, Yashpal seems to have little feel for the constant struggle for survival of the peasants and farmers of the countryside where a majority of the Indian population lives. From this point of view, Yashpal's writings give us a picture only of a small segment of urban India; they do not represent a cross-section of Indian society.

Yashpal's most outstanding novel is *Jhūṭhā sac*, a two-volume work, which begins with the partition of India in 1947 and end in the late 1950s. It provides a Marxist interpretation of the social history of urban India during the period following independence.

Because of his strong ideological commitment, Yashpal's analysis of the Indian life is one-sided and biased. Quite often his picture is overdrawn, and in fact, a distortion of reality. For instance, his assertion in *Jhūṭhā sac* that it was the Congress Party which gave up on the unity of India in 1947, whereas the Communist Party was trying to save it, is not borne out by an historical examination of this period. Furthermore, his observation that the division of India and the creation of Pakistan was the result of the British policy of "Divide and Rule," and the idea of division of the country originated with the introduction of communal representation in the legislative bodies and in jobs, is again an oversimplification of a highly complex social and cultural conflict which had existed between the Hindus and Muslims for centuries. There is no doubt that his description of corruption, nepotism, favoritism, and political manipulation under the Congress Party bosses is realistic, but there is no guarantee that these social and political evils could be rooted out from society if only there were a complete assertion of the power of the masses.

When compared with Western standards, Yashpal's advocacy of sexual freedom is moderate. However, his handling of sex in his novels is directed more by Freudian psychology, rather than by the principles of Socialist Realism. Coming from a middle-class Hindu family and educated in a reformist religious school during his childhood where any talk about sex was a religious taboo, Yashpal seems to derive special pleasure from advocating sexual behavior of the Hindu middle class of India.

Yashpal has also tried to provide a Marxist reinterpretation of Indian history. He has written two historical novels. *Divyā* (1945) was written to describe the struggle for power between the upper- and the lower-caste groups in an ancient Indian republic, whereas *Amitā* (1956) is an effort to describe the futility of war and was written in support of the Communist-sponsored peace movement.

Nagarjun is another outstanding Marxist novelist of Hinsi. Nagarjun was born in Bihar, one of the most backward states of India, and he has a rural and agrarian background. Unlike Yashpal, Nagarjun was brought up in a more traditional manner and was educated in Sanskrit, Prakrit and Pali, the classical languages of India. He was also exposed to Marxist ideas in jail, while serving his term of imprisonment for participating in the freedom movement.

Nagarjun has twenty-five publications to his credit. *Ratīnāth kī cācī* (1948), *Balcanamā* (1952), *Bābā bateseranāth* (1954), *Varun ke beṭe* (1957), *Kumbhī pāk* (1957), *Hīrak jayantī* (1962) are some of his outstanding novels. Nagarjun is more narrowly focused, and unlike Yashpal, he primarily deals with the rural life of Bihar. In most of his novels, Nagarjun depicts a regional or a parochial culture, quite frequently using the local dialect and slang. It is the opinion of many critics that he has been very successful in depicting the dire poverty of the peasants, the landless laborers, and the lower-caste Hindus of Bihar. He vividly contrasts the life styles of the rich landlords, who spend most of their time in drinking and debauchery, and the poor peasants, who are occasionally subjected to the *zamīndār*'s terror and ruthless exploitation. The stories are sad and touching; they become all the more touching when one discovers how real they are, because most of Nagarjun's stories are based upon his personal observation of the village life of Bihar.

His *Hīrak jayantī* is a satire dealing with a Congress Party minister of government. It is a somewhat overstated case of a minister's self-aggrandizement.

Nagarjun's novels are much less doctrinaire, and they do not seem to be highly propagandistic. They are more in the tradition of Munshi Prem Chand. However, they are certainly not completely free from ideological bias.

Amritray, the talented son of Munshi Prem Chand, has written two outstanding novels, *Bīj* (1953) and *Hāthī ke dānt* (1956). In *Bīj*, Amritray has mainly depicted the frustrations, political alienations, and ultimate ideological conversion of a middle-class youth to Marxism. Most of his characters are young intellectuals who frequently recite Shakespeare, Shelley, Keats, and Browning in their conversations with each other during their student life. Subsequently, faced with the hard realities of life (such as unemployment, subsistence wages, poor housing conditions, and frustrations of the extended family system), it is not surprising that they turn to Marxism and to the Communist Party to seek the ultimate solutions to the social, political, and economic problems of Indian society. The novel is full of ideological exhortations, and praise for Soviet art and society.

Hāthī ke dānt satirizes the Congress Party's ruling elite. It describes how the *zamīndārs* (the former exploiters of the peasants and the farmers), who supported the British Government all their lives, suddenly turned to the Congress Party when the country became independent. The ruling elite of the Congress Party at the provincial level is depicted as consisting of self-serving political careerists.

The late Rangey Raghav, who was born in South India, wrote twenty-two novels, though not all of them are based upon Socialist Realism. His *Vishād math* (1946) is a description of the heartless exploitation of the people of Bengal by the British Government and the capitalist classes of India during the Bengal famine of the 1940s. In *Gharonde* (1941), he describes an unsuccessful effort at the organization of a peasant revolt. The novel is an exercise in emotional outbursts of idealism, rather than a realistic description of the struggle of the Indian peasantry. In his *Hazūr* (1952) Rangey Raghav describes political and social developments in India from 1931 and 1951. Following Party lines, he attacks the Congress Party leadership and denounces the national government of India as bourgeoisie. Like all the Marxists of the period, he contends that unless the means of production of wealth are brought under the control of the working classes, there can be no genuine freedom in the country. His voluminous novel, *Sīddha sādā rāstā* (1955), is a rebuttal of Bhagavati Charan Varma's famous *Tere mere rāste*, in which Varma denounces the role of the Congress and Communist Parties and the terrorists during the independence movement. Not unexpectedly, Rangey Raghav, in his rebuttal to Varma, glorifies the Communist Party workers to the exclusion of all others.

Bhairav Prasad Gupta, who was born in a poverty-stricken district of eastern Uttar Pradesh, has focused on the trails and tribulations of the peasants, farmers, and the working classes of this region. In the tradition of Prem Chand, Bhairav Prasad, in some of his novels, has provided extremely vivid and realistic portrayals of the peasants' and farmers' struggle for survival. *Gangā maiyā* (1953) is the best of Bhairav Prasad's many novels.[10] *Gangā maiyā* is a realistic and picturesque description of rural life, free from political propaganda. Another work, *Mashāl* (1957), is a description of the working class movement in the industrial city of Kanpur. This novel is not only full of propagandistic passages, but it is also an exaggerated description of the heroic qualities of working-class leaders.[11] His *Sattimaiyā kā caurā* (1959) is, in essence, a Marxist attack on all non-Communist parties of India. He also analyzed the causes of religious and communal tensions, which occasionally explode into Hindu-Muslim riots. He believes that such tension and division within Indian society can be effectively managed only when the existing political system is replaced by a Communist system. Leaders belonging to all other non-Communist political parties, he asserts, do not have secular attitudes and, despite their assertions, they are communal at heart. They continue to exploit Hindu-Muslim differences to further their partisan position. Thus, *Sattimaiyā kā caurā* is based upon the author's belief that only the Communist Party provides satisfactory solutions to all of India's problems.

Gajanan Madhav Muktibodh is another poet turned novelist. Muktibodh, who started as a school teacher and spent most of his life either as an educator or a journalist, wrote mainly of subjects dealing with middle-class intellectuals. Like Amritray, hischaracters are teachers, journalists and intellectuals, who, reflecting their Westernized middle-class background, continue to quote English poets and talk about American, French and British literary traditions. In his short novel, *Vipātra*, Muktibodh attacks the Western concept of "personal freedom" and "liberal democracy." He writes, "we

are told that we have personal freedom. But this assertion is meaningless. We have freedom only to sell ourselves and to purchase others."[12] Accepting the labor theory of value as the basis of all value, he refers to the position of intellectuals in Indian society, who, according to Muktibodh, sell their right to fight and also their right to freedom of thought and expression. Whenever anyone of them tries to assert his rights, he is forced to starve. In the absence of economic security, there can be no real personal freedom.[13]

Like *Vipātra*, Muktibodh's other three novels, *Cānd kā mukh terā hai*, *Ek sāhityik ke ḍairī*, and *Kāth kā sāpanā* are also highly critical of the existing social structure and the values of the westernized middle class of India. Comparatively speaking, Muktibodh's novels are dull, slow-moving and hard to read.

Among contemporary Marxist novelists, Shivnarayan Shrivastva, who has published two novels, is considered as the most successful narrator of the life of the working-class people of north India. Born into a poor farming family of U.P., Shrivastva could get only limited education, and he had to start earning his living in a textile factory at the age of sixteen. During the thirty years of his job as a textile worker, Shrivastva became active in the organization of labor unions, rising finally to the position of an official in the All India Trade Union Congress in 1961. This experience has given him unique insight into working-class life and all its frustrations and sufferings. The result is that his two novels could easily be termed as the most authentic description in Hindi of the life of the working classes.[14] Some Hindi critics consider his works as great as that of Maxim Gorky, which, however, may be an overstatement. Shrivastva, no doubt, describes the life of the textile and construction workers as he lived it. It is a pathetic and realistic description, but he is unable to go beyond the simple description of their lives. His works lack depth and analysis. There is a great deal of sloganizing and cataloguing of strikes and lockouts, which sometimes becomes extremely dull. There is little sophistication and too much simplification of highly complex situations.

Rajendra Yadav is one of the younger authors, who is well known for his satirical works on the post-independence political leadership of the Congress Party. The picture of the Congress Party leaders, which emerges from his novel *Ukhare hue log*,[15] is that of corrupt, unprincipled, and unscrupulous thieves. Guided by their animal lust, they seem to be concerned only with money, power, and sexual pleasure. They are presented as the parasites of society, who are in league with the rising capitalist classes of India, seeking the enslavement of the peasants, the workers of the country. He attacks Gandhi as a person and also his doctrine of non-violence, and glorifies the Marxian concept of proletarian revolution. Naturally, therefore, according to Yadav, the salvation of India and its people lies in the violent struggle of the united masses against the unscrupulous alliance of the Congress Party leaders and the capitalist classes of India.

An account of the Progressive novels in Hindi would be incomplete if I did not mention the name of Rahul Sankrityayan, who has written five novels. Most of his novels are historical and present Marxist interpretations of ancient Indian history. His characters are historical, but they speak the modern language of Marxism, and, therefore, they are somewhat unnatural and unrealistic.

(2)

Traits of Positive and Negative Heroes

as Models of Political Behavior

The Marxist novels, in accordance with the theory of purposive art, aim at the propagation of certain political ideas and goals, and they also advocate specific behavior patterns. The heroes and heroines in such novels are created to portray ideologically desirable behavior patterns and they are termed "positive heroes"; those whose behavior is undesirable are called "negative heroes." According to Paul Hollander, a positive hero stands as a model for "the attitude and mode of behavior to be emulated and cultivated and the other [models] for those to be avoided and suppressed."[16]

The positive heroes in Hindi novels conform to the Communist Party program and ideology, though they are the products of the cultural and political conditions existing in India. They have certain basic traits which distinguish them from other characters in the novels. The distinguishing traits of the positive heroes in Progressive novels of Hindi can be summarized as follows:

1. *Party Loyalty:* Unquestioned loyalty to the Party and unconditional acceptance of the Party directives is one of the most important traits of the positive heroes. One can find numerous instances in the Progressive novels of Hindi where the heroes demonstrated their loyalty to the Party even to their own detriment. Thus, Harish in *Dādā kāmreḍ*, Brahamdutt in *Sīddha sādā rāstā*, Comrade Bhushan in *Manushya ke rūp*, Satyavan and Virendra in *Bīj*, all show their willingness to subordinate their personal ambitions and desires to accept the responsibilities assigned by the Party. They believe, furthermore, that it is only the Party which has the right to make decisions, the decisions arrived at collectively are superior to an individual's judgements.

2. *Willingness to Make Personal Sacrifices and Bear Hardships:* A positive hero is always willing to sacrifice his family, his love, his personal comforts and ambitions to attain goals set by the Party. They do not seem to care much about their personal income. If they are born in the upper strata of the society and they belong to a high-income group, they are willing to contribute liberally to the Party. The positive heroes are not afraid of going to jail if the completion of their assignments result in imprisonment. Such heroes as Satyavan in *Bīj*, Asad in *Jhūṭhā sac*, Brahamdutt in *Sīddha sādā rāstā*, Naren and Manzoor in *Mashāl*, and Rajman in *Subah kā sūraj*, are beaten up by police and are imprisoned. Many of them refuse to get married without Party permission, even though their decisions may distress their lovers.[17] They are depicted as highly self-disciplined, mature, and masters of their emotions.

3. *Rejection of Traditional Norms of Social Behavior:* Indian society is characterized by traditional norms of social behavior and antiquated social institutions such as the caste system, caste endogamy, arranged marriages, dowery system, untouchability, Hindu-Muslim tensions, and assignment of inferior

status to women. The positive heroes ridicule religious beliefs, reject parental authority, attack the caste system, celebrate inter-caste or inter-religious marriages, and work towards the mobilization of the untouchables and other lower-caste groups for the class struggle and for their eventual economic emancipation.

They reject the institution of marriage, also. In their opinion, marriage and a woman's fidelity to her husband perpetuate the slavery of women. The institutions of marriage and the concept of fidelity are some of the last remnants of the feudal society. They cannot, therefore, exist in "really modern" societies. In Western societies, they assert, women are usually parasites, for they live on the income of their husbands. In place of marriage, they "seek the union of two souls independent of economic needs."[18]

The positive heroes also reject the life styles of the club-going and liquor-consuming, Westernized upper strata of society. They are described as emulators of the decadent Western culture.

4. *Liberal Attitudes Towards Sexual Behavior:* In Soviet literature, as Paul Hollander points out, the positive heroes have a kind of puritanical attitude towards sex. Some of them shun sex, whereas for others it is a matter of no importance.[19] In the Marxist novels in Hindi, however, the positive hero's liberal attitude towards sex is prominently depicted. For a positive hero, sex is as natural a physical urge as is hunger. It is argued that if there is time and one can afford it, one must enjoy sex life vigorously.[20] Sex is to be enjoyed for pleasure; procreation is secondary, especially for women. "Pregnancy in our society is a woman's weakness which results for her in slavery."[21] Positive heroes, therefore, accept methods of birth control as perfectly normal ways of life.

The remarkable aspect of the life of the positive hero is that the Marxist noverlists of Hindi present them as sex symbols. Beautiful women, mostly of the upper strata of society, are too eager to submit themselves to the positive heroes. They find them irresistible. Thus, Shailbala of *Dādā kāmreḍ* breaks off her engagement and surrenders herself to Hareesh. Similarly, Kanak, the heroine of *Jhūṭhā sac*, and Manorama of *Manushya ke rūp*, divorce their husbands for the hands of the positive heroes, who are invariably the active members of the Communist Party. In fact, the positive heroines of Yashpal, Ancal and Amritray find the fulfillment of their life goals in their complete surrender to the Party heroes.

5. *Loyalty Towards Soviet Union:* The positive heroes in Progressive novels in Hindi look upon the Soviet Union as the ideal political system. They term it as the motherland of the workers of the world. They believe in subordination of the interests of their own country to the needs of the Soviet Union. Commenting of the role of the Soviet armies in World War II, the hero of *Mashāl* says that:

> Today the brave armies of the Soviet Union are sacrificing their sons and daughters not for their own freedom's sake only, but for the freedom of the whole world. Therefore, our first and foremost duty is that we should help the armed forces of the Soviet Union by all possible efforts.[22]

Elsewhere he declares that, "the victory of Soviet Union is our victory, it is the victory of our struggle for freedom. It will destroy not only the Fascist powers, but it will also weaken the imperialist countries"[23] such as Great Britain, and help India in gaining her freedom.

Another author calls the Soviet Union the brightest star of modern history and the only ray of hope in this dark world.[24] They perceive the Soviet Union as a genuine people's democracy, a society where there is no exploitation of the workers, a land where the workers are the masters of their own destiny.

Thus, the positive hero is not swayed by narrow nationalist loyalties. His political activities are guided by the goals of international Communism, as established by the Soviet Union and its leaders.[25]

6. *Identification with the Cause of the Workers and Peasants:* The Marxist novelists have greatly stressed the identification of their positive heroes with the cause of the workers and peasants and their organizations. Most of the positive heroes become involved in the organization of the workers or peasants, not so much as a political force, but as trade union members. They seek frequent confrontations with the employers by organizing strikes, sit-ins, walkouts and mass demonstrations. These activities, they believe, are essential not only to seek justice for peasants and workers, but also to enhance their class consciousness. In their capacity as the self-appointed spokesmen for the working classes, they address the meetings of the workers and peasants, organize their study circles, and indoctrinate them into a simplified form of Marxism and Communism. They also conduct negotiations with the employers in their behalf, raise money to help working-class families in distress, or support them while on strike. As leaders of the working classes, they are always faithfully following the Party line.

7. *Belief in Hindu-Muslim Harmony:* The positive heroes work towards the promotion of understanding between religious communities of India. Especially they seek to build a united front of Hindus and Muslims on the basis of class division. They suggest that both Hindu and Muslim members of the working class have only one enemy to fight, capitalism. They assert that it is the capitalist class which tries to foment inter-communal tensions for the continuation of economic exploitation of the working classes. Hindus and Muslims have no basic clash of interests and both have a common proletarian culture.

The positive heroes seek friendly relations across religious lines. They also encourage inter-religious and intercommunal marriages, which, they believe, will ultimately lead to the development of an assimilative society in India.

8. *Activism and Love of Work:* The positive heroes are presented as secular missionaries who believe in leading purposeful lives. Consequently, all of them are extremely dedicated to Party work. They keep themselves constantly busy in carrying our various kinds of assignments for the Party. They do not waste their time in social clubs or other time-consuming recreational activities. "Translated into personality traits, the love of work becomes more diffuse activism, an attitude that shuns reflection and comtemplation, giving the impression the activity is valued for its own sake."[26] The activism is also the result of their strong goal-oriented personalities.

Besides these traits, the positive heroes also exhibit optimism. They are confident about the future and are convinced about the inevitability of the victory of the working classes and the Communist Party.

Traits of the Negative Heroes

Whereas the positive heroes are the embodiment of virtue and are highly recommended models of political behavior, the negative heroes have opposite personalities, and they possess the traits, political values, beliefs, and party affiliations which must be rejected if India is ever to realize its dream of a classless and stateless society. The following are the traits of negative heroes, as they emerge from an analysis of the writings of progressive novelists:

1. *Opportunism:* It is depicted as the most common trait of the negative heroes. Some negative heroes are persons who were formerly part of the landed aristocracy and who supported the British government during India's struggle for independence. After independence, they joined the Congress Party, since it became the ruling party in India. Thakur Praduman Singh in *Hathī ke dānt* is an example of such a hero. There are other business or industrial leaders who change their loyalties according to their convenience.

There is another group of opportunistic "negative heroes," who were leftists or belonged to the progressive parties, such as the Socialist Party of India, but after independence they joined the ruling faction of the Congress Party, because it offered them an opportunity to improve their fortunes. Jaydev Puri in *Jhutha sac* is an example of this kind of negative hero. Some negative heroes are attracted to reformist and revolutionary activities, but they leave them, because they do not want to "dirty" their hands, mix with poor people, or harm themselves financially.

Because ministers at the state or national level can distribute political patronage, many of these negative heroes -- poets, newspaper editors, or the organizers of community societies -- become active in organizing public receptions or conferring social honors upon them. The opportunistic (negative) heroes seem to be constantly working to curry favor with public officials.

2. *Hypocrisy and Duplicity:* The negative heroes have been depicted as having dual personalities: public and private. They also demonstrate different standards of behavior in their public and private lives. In public, for instance, they express their faith in modern and liberal ideas, but in their private lives they are extremely conservative and traditional in their behavior. In public meetings, they donounce traditional superstitions, but they may have numerous astrologers to advise them privately. They express their opposition to the caste system and express their belief in the model of an assimilative society, but they forbid their children to marry out of their caste. They support Mahatma Gandhi and his gaol of Hindu-Muslim unity, but amidst their close friends denounce him as the real enemy of the Hindus. They exhort the people to buy *swadeshi*, or indigenous, products, but they

themselves have a strong desire for foreign luxury goods. In public life they denounce the black market and profiteering, but are themselves involved in shady businesses and black marketing.

3. *Amoral and Corrupt:* The conduct of the negative heroes is characterized by a high degree of amoralism. If they hold public offices or elected positions, they are constantly helping their children, relatives and friends with jobs, government contracts, import or export permits, and loans. They use all methods to keep themselves in power or in an influential position. They do not think in terms of public good; their objective in enrichment, accumulation of wealth, and gratification of their natural desires.

4. *Sexual Depravity and Cowardice:* Sexual depravity and cowardice are other prominent personality traits of the negative heroes. Despite the fact that many of them are married and middle-aged parents of grown children, they continue to seduce young girls. Many of them have mistresses from among their employees or from among the teachers in the educational institutions which they manage.[27] Others, who hold elected offices, offer jobs, and thus lure young college girls into their traps.[28] Their sex depravity takes an extreme form when some of them commit murders[29] or when they try to rape the daughters of their mistresses and thus force them to commit suicide.[30] They seem to have no tender feelings of live and affection, and no refined tastes.

Needless to say, most of the negative heroes are affiliated with the Congress Party, while only a few come from other non-Communists parties in India. The positive heroes are always from the Communist Party.

Political Beliefs, Values and Attitudes of the Marxist Novelists

The traits of the positive and the negative heroes, as analyzed above, are, in fact, expressions of the values, beliefs, and political preferences of the Progressive novelists. They have also expressed their ideological commitments in their novels. For instance, most of them have expressed their faith in the Marxian goal of nationalization of industries and abolition of private property. The system of private property is looked upon as the root cause of all social evils; they think it destroys man's basic decency.[31] They reject the concept of liberal democracy, because under it there is actually no freedom for the common man, especially for the members of the working class. It provides freedom for the capitalists; it works for the well-to-do people only.[32] For the working class, real freedom exists only under the dictatorship of the proletariat, where a classless and stateless society can be established.[33]

They also support the concept of proletarian revolution, and ridicule the Gandhian concept of non-violence and social change through a change of heart by the oppressor.

> Gandhi's theory of using moral means to achieve moral ends (the concept of purity of means) is a simple nonsense. . . . His emphasis on non-violence has to a considerable extent, rendered the people impotent. It has destroyed people's will to fight.[34]

Another novelist declares that "I respect Gandhi as a man but not his ideals. . . . The real change in society can be brought about only through revolution.[35]

They also seem to have a tendency to glorify the "masses" and the "working classes" as the "real progressive forces." It is the people, they hold, who are the real source of social change and social justice, and if "real power" passes into the hands of the masses, only then will we have a social system based upon complete justice and freedom.

Their perception and interpretation of the freedom movement also follows typical Marxist lines. For them, the movement led by the Congress Party for the freedom of India, was bourgeois in its nature. They hold that its leadership, guided by its own class interest, was fighting for its own rights and not for the freedom of the working classes.[36] They warn that, like the Indian feudal classes who betrayed the Indian masses by joining hands with the British Government, now the bourgeois leadership of the Congress Party might also betray the Indian masses for their own class interests.[37]

Since India won her independence under the bourgeois leadership, there has been only a change of masters, but no real freedom for the Indian masses. The British ruling elites have been replaced by the Indian bourgeois, which now uses the coercive power of the state, its jails, its police, and court systems to keep the working classes in subjugation.[38] There has been no real economic or political gains for the workers, peasants, and the lower middle classes. Their hopes for freedom from want and freedom from fear and ignorance have still to materialize.[39] It is obvious from the analysis that the existing political system in India is not trusted by the Marxist novelists in Hindi.

- 3 -

Conclusion and Assessment

The Marxist novelists have made significant contributions to modern Hindi literature. As critics of the Indian social and political life, they have been successful in exposing its evil aspects. Not only have they criticized the traditional norms of social behavior and rejected the caste hierarchy and other related aspects of the Hindu society, but they strongly advocated secularism in politics and religious tolerance in social life. Through their writings they also forced the Hindi writers to look beyond the national horizons and to confront the international issues of war and peace.

They particularly focused on the hypocrisy of the Congress Party leaders, on corruption within the ruling elite and on their manipulation of political power to promote their groups or factional interests.

Despite these contributions, we cannot deny that their characterizations of *all* those characters who belong to the Congress Party as opportunists, corrupt, amoral and self-seeking careerists, and the glorification of the Communist Party members as selfless patriots is the result of their strong ideological bias.

The Congress Party, furthermore, has also been successful in the creation of a new alliance of social forces, superimposing them on a traditional social structure in rural India.[40] It has politicized the rural masses and mobilized them from time to time to secure their electoral support. No Marxist novel takes note of this changed political situation existing in modern India. Seen in this light, the novels based upon Socialist Realism give us hardly any objective and *realistic* appraisal of contemporary Indian social and political realities.

Because of their strong ideological bias, their origin from the educated urban middle class and their lack of real insight into the life of the Indian masses, none of these novelists have been able to produce any outstanding work interpretive of the fast-changing social and political life in India. Despite their emphasis on the people, none of their works can match Prem Chand's *Godan*, in its depth, quality and sensitive depiction of the rural life in India.

Decline of the Marxist Novels in Hindi: Since the late 1960s there has been a constant decline in the number of the new Marxist novels published in Hindi. Such prolific writers as Rangey Raghav, Rahul Sankrityayan and G. M. Muktibodh are dead and there has been practically no infusion of "new blood" into the group of the Marxist novelists. One does not find any promising young novelist being groomed by this group.

There has also been disenchantment and disillusionment both with the Soviet Union and Communist China. Many of the older novelists who visited the Soviet Union discovered to their bitter disappointment that Soviet society was not a heaven for workers and farmers, as they had once dreamt.[42] Then in 1962 came the Chinese attack on India and a large majority of the Hindi novelists were just not convinced that the Chinese were the "victims" of Indian "aggression."

Similarly, Khrushchev's de-Stalinization, his use of brutal force against the Polish and Hungarian revolts and subsequent Soviet handling of Czechoslovakian liberal Socialism came as a rude shock to many of them and forced them to re-evaluate their ideological orientation. Many eventually went into voluntary retirement.

The caste division of the Hindu society also has its impact on the progressive novelists, as it affected the Communist Parties in other parts of India.[43] "Our progressive writers," commented a former member of AIPWA, "are progressive only in appearances, but not in practice."[44] Despite their denunciation of the caste system, the progressive novelists belonging to the high castes still continue to despise the authors of low caste. This status-consciousness on the basis of high caste and faction formation on grounds of common caste led to bitter divisions among the Hindi progressive authors.[45] The employment of many of the writers by state or national governments, universities, large publishing houses, All-India Radio, and handsome royalty earnings from the publication of their translated works into Russian have further weakened their revolutionary fervor and ideological commitment and have put them in the category of petty bourgeois.

The Communist movement itself in India has been in the doldrums during all this period. First Moscow's support of Nehru, the Congress Party government and its foreign policy, caused considerable confusion among the Hindi novelists and authors. Subsequently, the ideological rift between Russia and China led to the split within the Communist movement itself, resulting in the formation of first two and then three Communist Parties.[46] This split within the Communist movement in India has left the Hindi Marxist writers in complete disarray.

FOOTNOTES

1. Hafiz Malik, "The Marxist Literary Movement in India and Pakistan," *The Journal of Asian Studies* (August 1967), pp. 649-664; see also Shivkumar Mishra *Pragativād* (Delhi: Rajkamal Prakashan, 1966) and Ram Prasad Trivedi, *Pragativādī samīksha* (Kanpur: Grantham, 1964).

2. Nand Dulare Vajpai, "Introduction," in K. C. Suman and Y. K. Malik, *Sāhitya vivechan*, 4th ed., (Delhi: Atma Ram and Sons, 1968).

3. On Prem Chand see Hans Raj "Rahbar," *Prem Chand: His Life and Work* (Delhi: Atma Ram and Sons, 1957).

4. Brij Bhushan Singh "Ādarsh," *Hindī ke rājnītik upanyāson kā anushīlan* (1960-63) (Allahabad: Rachana Prakashan, 1970), pp. 366-368.

5. In reference to the Soviet situation, Paul Hollander defines Socialist Realism as "a theoretical framework for the complete subordination of the arts to the political objective upheld by the Soviet regime." ("Models of Behavior in Stalinist Literature: A Case Study of Totalitarian Values and Controls," *American Sociological Review*, [1966], p. 353.)

   Hollander further adds that Socialist Realism in "the theory and practice of the artistic representation of social reality *in terms of what it ought to be like according* to the prescriptions supplied by the Soviet ideological and power elite at any given time." (*Ibid.*, p. 354.)

   For futher discussion see Abraham Tertz, *On Socialist Realism* (New York: Pantheon, 1960); Louis Harap, *Social Roots of the Arts* (New York: International Publishers Co., 1949); Vera Alexandrova, *A History of Soviet Literature* (New York: Doubleday and Co., 1963); Marc Slonim, *Soviet Russian Literature: Writers and Problems* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964); and Ralph Fox, *The Novel and the People* (London: Lawrence and Wisehart, 1937), pp. 103-113.

6. R. Shukla "Ancal," *Ulkā* (Varanasi: Hindi Pracharak Pustkalaya, 1959), pp. 16-49, 205-222.

7. Yashpal, *Sinhāvlokan: Part I* (Lucknow: Viplva Karyalya, 1964), p. 132.

8. Following is the list of Yashpal's novels: *Dādā kāmred* (7th ed., 1965); *Desh drohī* 7th ed., 1967); *Gītā: partī kāmred* (5th ed., 1963); *Divyā* (9th ed., 1968); *Manushya ke rūp* (6th ed., 1964); *Amitā* (4th ed., 1963); *Jhūthā sac: vatan aur desh* (4th ed., 1963); *Jhūthā sac: desh kā bhavishya* (3rd ed., 1967); *Barah ghante* (2nd ed., 1966); *Apsara kā shrāp* (1965); *Kyoṅ phesen* (1968); all published by Viplva Prakashan, Lucknow.

9. Amritray, *Bīj*, 3rd ed., (Allahabad: Sarjana Prakashan, 1967); *Hāthī ke dānt* (Allahabad: Hans Prakashan, 1956).

10. Bhairav Prasad Gupta, *Ganga maiya* (Allahabad: Dhara Prakashan, 1953). This novel of Mr. Gupta has been translated into various foreign languages, including French, Russian and Chinese.

11. Bhairav Prasad Gupta, *Mashāl* 2nd ed. (Allahabad: Neelabh Prakashan, 1957).

12. Gajanan Madhav Muktībodh, *Vipatra* (Delhi: Bharatiya Jamanpity, 1970), p. 41.

13. *Ibid.*, pp. 42-43.

14. Shivnarayan Shrīvastva, *Dhuān āg aur insān* (New Delhi: People's Publishing House, 1960) *Subah kā suraj* (New Delhi: People's Publishing House, 1970).

15. Rajindra Yadav, *Ukhare hūe log*, (Delhi: Akshar Prakashan, 1970). His other novels are *Shāh aur māt*, *Mantrā vidh*, and *Sāra ākash*, all published by Akshar Prakashan, Delhi.

16. Paul Hollander, *op. cit.*, p. 353. See also Joe C. Huang, "Fictional Heroes as Positive Models in Rebuilding Chinese Political Culture," a paper presented in the 1972 convention of the American Political Science Association.

17. Yashpal, *Jhutha sac* Student ed., (Allahabad: Lok Bharati Prakashan 1969), p. 96.

18. Yadav, *Ukhare hūe log*, p. 23 and Yashpal, *Dādā kamred* p. 28.

19. Hollander, *op. cit.*, pp. 357-358.

20. Yashpal, *Dādā kāmred*, p. 115.

21. *Ibid.*, p. 118.

22. Bhairav Prasad Gupta, *Mashāl*, p. 115.

23. *Ibid.*, p. 118.

24. Amritroy, *Bīj*, p. 87.

25. Yashpal, *Jhutha sac*, Student Edition, p. 337.

26. Hollander, *op. cit.*, p. 357.

27. Amritroy, *Hathi ke dānt*, p. 53-83.

28. Yashpal, *Jhutha sac*, Student Edition, p. 289.

29. Amritroy, *Hathi ke dānt*, p. 34-44.

30. Rajendra Yadav, *Ukhre hūe log.*

31. Rangey Raghav, *Sīdhā sādhā rāstā*, p. 328.

32. G. M. Muktibodh, *Vipātra*, p. 82.

33. Rangey Raghav, *Sīddhā sādā rāstā*, p. 328.

34. Amritray, *Bīj*, p. 26.

35. Anchal, *Ulkā*, p. 37-38.

36. Nagarjun, *Bālchanamā*, p. 102.

37. Rangey Raghav, *Sīddhā sādā rāstā*, p. 339.

38. Bhairav Prasad Gupta, *Mashāl*, p. 20.

39. Amritray, *Bīj*, pp. 260-262.

40. Lloyd I. Rudolph and Susan H. Rudolph, *Modernity of Tradition*, (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1967); D. E. Potter, *Government in Rural India* (London: Bell, 1964); M. N. Srinivas, *Caste in Modern India and Other Essays* (London: Asia Publishing House, 1962); F. G. Bailey, "Politics and Caste in Contemporary Orissa," in C. H. Philips (ed.), *Politics and Society in India* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1959); R. Kothari and T. Maru, "Caste and Secularism in India," *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. XXV, 1965; D. N. Majumdar, *Caste and Communication in an Indian Village* (London: Asia Publishing House, 1958); F. G. Bailey, *Politics and Social Change* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1963); R. L. Park and I. Tinker (eds.), *Leadership and Political Institutions in India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1959); Philip Mason (ed.), *India and Ceylon: Unity and Diversity* (London: Oxford University Press, 1967). One can see numerous other works interpretive of the Indian political situation such as W. H. Morris-Jones, *The Government and Politics in India* (London: Hutchinson, 1964), and R. Kothari, *Politics in India* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1970).

41. For a realistic appraisal of the political and social life in India, it is helpful to refer to non-ideological novelists such as Shrilal Shukla, *Rāg darbārī* (Delhi: Rajkamal Prakashan, 1968), Rahi Massoom Raza, *Topī shuklā* (Delhi: Rajkamal Prakashan, 1969), Amritlal Nagar, *Būnd aur samudra*, (Allahabad: Kitabi Mahal, 1970), Rahi Massoom Raza, *Himmat jaunpuri*, (Delhi: Shabdkar, 1969), Shivprasad Singh, *Alag alag vaitaranī* (Allahabad: Lok Bharati Prakashan, 1970), Chanakya Sen, *Mukhyā mantrī* (Delhi: Rajkamal Prakashan, 1966), and Yadvendra Sharma "Chandra," *Ek aur mukhyā mantrī* (Delhi: National Publishing House, 1969).

42. In a recent (31 August 1971) interview with the author Nagarjun, the noted Marxist Hindi novelist expressed his deep disappointment with the Soviet system after his visit to that country, which he had just completed.

43. Selig Harrison, *India: The Most Dangerous Decades* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1960).

44. Interview with Nagarjun.

45. This development was brought to the notice of the author by Prabhakar Machwe, General Secretary of the Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi.

46. On the Communist movement in India see John H. Kautsky, *Moscow and the Communist Party of India: A Study in the Post-War Evolution of International Strategy* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1956), Harry Gelman, "The Communist Party of India: Sino-Soviet Battleground," in A. Doak Barnett (ed.), *Communist Strategies in Asia* (New York: Praeger, 1963), Leopold Labedz (ed.), *Revisionism: Essays on the History of Marxist Ideas* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1962), Herman Ray, "Peking and the Indian Communist Party," *Problems of Communism* (November 1966; John R. Wood, "Observations on the Indian Communist Party Split," *Pacific Affairs*, Vol. 37, No. 1 (1965), Marcus F. Franda, "India's Third Communist Party," *Asian Survey* (November 1969), Gargi Dutt, "Peking, The Indian Communist Movement and International Communism 1962-1970," *Asian Survey* (October 1971).

SOCIALIST REALISM IN MODERN HINDI POETRY*

Anjani Kumar Sinha

The University of Chicago

Bhartendu Harishchandra (1850-1885), the first major poet of *Kharī boli*, wrote at a time when British rule was being consolidated in Northern India. He looked at the expansion of railroads, mail service, the printing press and modern education with curiosity and spoke about them with a sense of humor, but he commented sharply on the way India was being colonized. His *mukarīs*[1] are noted for poignant satire written in colloquial Hindi:

> He sucks our guts out;
> He gnaws our health, thought, wealth,
> And with good humor,
> No one out-barters him.
> Who? My friend? No, the Englishman.[2]

Other poets of his circle, Pratap Narayan Mishra and Badri Narayan Chaudhary "Premghan," also spoke against the colonial exploitation of Indian resources.

The first three decades of the twentieth century were a period of national awakening, a period marked by the radicalization of the Indian National Congress, the Bengali anti-partition agitation, the Khilafat, the boycott, the Swadeshi and the Satyagrah Movements. We have a host of poets -- Shridhar Pathak, Gaya Prasad Shukla, Makhan Lal Chaturvedi, Ram Naresh Tripathi and Maithili Sharan Gupta -- raising the voice of nationalism in one way or another.

Those who were under the influence of Gandhi were very much concerned with ethical and moral problems. Adherence to non-violence and peace was almost an obsession with them, which was reflected not only in their selection of themes from different chapters of Indian history, but also in their choice of imagery from ancient Indian myths and legends. The revolutionary romanticists, on the other hand, wanted to overthrow British rule; they welcomed any ideology that could help them liberate the motherland, including anarchism.

In general, Gupta and Chaturvedi spoke for Gandhism, whereas Subhadra Kumari Chauhan, Bal Krishna Sharma "Nawin," and Ramdhari Singh "Dinkar" represented the voice of revolutionary romanticists.[3] Despite the differences in their politics, they all had a romantic attitude towards the wonder that was India and they were genuinely moved by the fate of the common man, particularly the peasants and the untouchables. To some extent, they were all influenced by the Indian renaissance, by the Arya Samaj, Brahmo Samaj

---

*I wish to express my thanks to Carlo Coppola, Colin Masica, David Rubin, Karine Schomer and Timothy Wallace for their suggestions and comments on an earlier draft of this paper. They are in no way responsible for my views.

and other social movements. The three sections of Maithili Sharan Gupta's *Bhārat bhāratī* (The Story of India) refer not only to ancient and modern India, but also to the India of the poet's imagination. The imagined India is a utopia in which Hindus and Muslims would live in peace and the caste system would stand for nothing but professional specialization. It is asserted that the British would not be able to hold on to India if she got rid of poverty, famine, epidemics and illiteracy, but no serious attempt is made to understand why such conditions existed and how they could be changed for the better. There are repeated references to glorious chapters of ancient and medieval India and there is a deep sense of regret that India is far behind European nations in modern times, but there is no attempt to find out why it is so. If someone tries to understand it, as Gupta does in *Bhārat bhārati*, he does so in a very trivial way. In many cases, traditional Indian concepts of time cycle (from *satyayuga* to *kaliyuga*, the latter being the period of inevitable triumph of evil forces) is used to explain why there is such a terrible situation all around India.

The waves of enthusiasm generated by the participation of the masses in non-cooperation and civil disobedience receded when the movements were suspended, first in 1921 because of the Chaurachauri incident and then in 1932 because of the Gandhi-Irwin Pact. During this period of political disengagement the poetry of the *chāyāwādi* school (romanticism) grew up. This new school advocated a withdrawal from the world of "didactic" poetry to the "poetry of the inner self"; it stood for "new humanism" and denounced the limited objectives of what it called the "poetry of Hindu renaissance."[4] We do not find this concept of "new humanism" different from the concept of humanism which revolutionary romanticists had. For that reason, we group them together as "idealist humanists," a group of people who were deeply concerned with the creation of the best conditions for human beings and believed in developing "self-consciousness" among individuals to achieve that goal. An important difference between the *chāyāwādi* poets of this period and the revolutionary romanticists is that the former were not involved in political activities -- at least in their poetic works -- whereas the latter were deeply committed to some political group or the other.

Although the emerging Indian consciousness was disillusioned by the not-so-effective Gandhian technique of political and social revolution, it did not follow the path of the *chāyāwādi* poets. Several young people organized themselves as Congress Socialists, a pressure group inside the Congress, in 1934, the year in which the manifesto of the Indian Progressive Writer's Assocation (IPWA) was published in London. By the time the IPWA had its first conference in Lucknow in 1936, Nehru had become the president of the Indian National Congress and was giving a new orientation to its policy. The manifesto of the IPWA emphasized that the basic tasks of the Indian writers were "to deal with the problems of hunger and poverty, social backwardness and political subjugation," repeating the vaguely expressed sentiments of the idealist humanists. What differentiated the manifesto from the views of the idealist humanists was its unambiguous insistence on criticizing the "spirit

of reaction," which included the tendency "to find a refuge from reality in spiritualism and idealism" and a determination "to rescue" literature from "the priestly, academic and decadent classes." It pleaded to bring literature into "the closest touch with the people" and make it a tool "to understand" the basic problems in order to "act." It called upon the writers not only "to give expression to the changes taking place in Indian life," but also to "assist the spirit of progress in the country."[5] However, the manifesto did not explain clearly what steps it proposed to take to achieve these objectives. Essentially, it called for Socialist Realism as against critical realism.[6] The IPWA manifesto demanded an awareness on the part of the writer not only of the development and structure of Indian society, but also of that society's goals.

Although the Lucknow conference of the IPWA was not attended by many eminent Hindi poets and writers, it made its impact on them. They could not ignore the fact that almost all Hindi-speaking Socialist intellectuals attended it and Premchand, the most eminent Hindi novelist of his time, presided over it. Premchand, initially a reformist and Gandhian idealist, was himself moving toward Socialist Realism. His shift in position was unlike the shortlived left-wing sympathies of André Gide and André Malraux; it was based on experiences of life. It indicated moral conviction rather than enthusiasm for a fad. His presidential address envisioned a combination of Socialist revolution and Gandhian humanitarianism.[7] This theme comes up again and again in the writings of Indian realists. At the end of the poem, "Samājwād-gandhiwād" (Socialism and Gandhism), Pant says:

> Undoubtedly,
> Gandhism teaches us how to be human
> And Communism
> How to plan the development of collective life.[8]

In another poem "To the Die-hard Materialists," he says:

> Materialism and Spiritualism are two aspects of
> this Universe.
> Can you extract the Truth
> By separating the individual from the society
> Or the abstract from the concrete?[9]

This approach to Marxism led Pant to consider Marx "the third eye of Shiva,"[10] the eye which opens to bring about destruction which would necessarily lead to the creation of a new proletariat culture based on new economic relations.

It is claimed that in the forties and fifties Pant became a committed Gandhian; however, we do not find any evidence of his denouncing the course of history as predicted by historical materialism or of his accepting the Gandhian utopia, or *rām rājya*.[11] His faith in the inevitability of revolution and its capacity to enable humanism to have its full growth prevented Pant

from coming closer to the experimentalists. At times he seems to put full faith in Vivekanand, Aurobindo and Gandhi, but from these uneasy moments of escape he readily comes back to the idea of having a Socialist society tempered with humanism.[12] In *Lokāyatan* (The Story of the People, 1964) Pant finds capitalism and dictatorship at the root of all wars and suffering, and he is delighted to see the war of liberation spreading over Asia and Africa. He sees the most significant step in human history, however, not as social revolution, but as change in human nature.[13] This repeated reference to, and emphasis on, humanism is there, not only in the poetry of critical humanists like Pant, but also in the poetry of committed Marxist poets like Nagarjun. Whether they raise their voices against the growth of Fascism in Europe before World War II, or against the communal riots in India before and after partition, whether they speak against the murder of Gandhi or of a striking factory worker or of a student, whether they condemn the murder of Lumumba or the bombing of North Vietnam, the keynote is the stress on humanism. What distinguishes these radical humanists from idealist humanists is their optimism. The radical humanists have full faith in the possibility of creating such a society in which the causes of unhappiness will be eliminated.

A survey of Marxist criticism in Hindi (S. B. Singh, 1948; Sharma, 1957; Trivedi, 1964; Agrawal, 1965; Gupta, 1966; Rai, 1967; N. Singh, 1968; Muktibodh, 1971, for example) leads us to a very confused picture regarding Socialist Realism in Hindi poetry. Much depends on how orthodox the critic is in regard to his approach to Marxism and how much flexibility he is ready to show in his interpretation of Socialist Realism. Without going into such endless debates, we have concentrated here on those points which are common to all Marxists and which clearly distinguish them from idealist humanists. On the basis of their poems and scattered critical writings (e.g., prefaces to poems), it can be suggested that they all regard man as the supreme good and interpret the human world as a result of the play of its own forces. Thus, they leave no scope for a mystical explanation for the fate of man, nor do they hold the displeasure of God responsible for the subhuman conditions of Indian society. This logically leads them to call for a fight against the factors that debase man; to abstain from the fight would mean a lack of conviction. Such an approach is very close to the concept of "radical humanism" (Schaff, 1970).

After World War II, and particularly during the first two decades of India's independence, the idealist humanists were disillusioned by the actions of the nationalist parties (particularly the Indian National Congress, which was the party in power) and became pessimists. The experimentalists of the younger generation (some of the *prayogwādis*) started treating society as the sum of isolated, atomized individuals who move meaninglessly in a depersonalized mass culture totally devoid of human values. The humanism of this generation is the humanism of a dying world, and, therefore, tragic and pessimistic. The radical humanists had their own share of disappointment: the short-lived success of the Telangana movement, the inner feuds between the Socialists and Communists and between the Communists of different ideological leanings, the Indo-Chinese border war of 1962 and its adverse

effect on the Progressive section of the Indian bourgeoisie. But because of their basically optimistic orientation towards life and their faith in man's ability to eliminate all undesirable social factors, they never lost faith in man. Their poems have traces of disappointment and disgust, impatience and anger, but not of pessimism. Contrast Kailash Vajpeyi's "Stalks of Flesh" with two small couplets of Kedarnath Agrawal:

> While I live amidst the vulgar, crazy men
> Who chew money
> And cling like crabs to stones
> I often wonder
> Why God grew
> The little stalks of flesh
> called MAN?
>
> (Vajpeyi)

> I am in search of the one
> Who is human
> And is human even now
> In spite of all his suffering;
> Firm in his character
> Tall and straight as a pine tree.
>
> (Agrawal)

> Death has become more powerful than life
> And yet, man hasn't forgotten how to laugh.
>
> (Agrawal)

These two approaches to humanity -- radical and idealist -- can be seen at work against the background of the Bangladesh crisis of 1970-71. In his poem, "Sharnarthī" (The Refugee), Sarveshwar Dayal Saxena gives a very moving picture of the suffering of the refugee. The poor man's world has shrunk overnight and even God seems to be helpless:

> And man?
> Don't talk of him;
> Better throw me in the den of a beast;
> If he's had a good meal, at least
> He won't kill me.[14]

The refugee does not want any light "so that we cannot see each other's faces any more." Saxena thinks that the refugee has every reason to think that way, because

> A village burns
> And the whole world
> Sits on the well, stretching its legs
> Near the wheelless fire engine.

The firemen are busy costuming themselves.
It is absolutely essential to examine
Whether their shoelaces are in order
And the creases of their shirts sharp.
Whether they look smart and clean-shaven
And can march in formation.
It is possible
They will open their manuals
And read the rules aloud
And shine the brass of the fire engines
Before they go into action,
If they do.[15]

Contrast this state of helplessness with what Haribansh Rai "Bacchan" has to say:

You will get out of these flames
Only when you turn yourself into flames.[16]

or with what Rajeev Saxena, a radical humanist, says:

No bayonet can cut through a stream
That touches the shores of its history and geography.
Smeared again and again with blood
Padma purifies itself every time
And clearer than ever
Resumes its onward journey.[17]

A poet like Dinkar Sonwalkar is hardly satisfied with the pessimism of idealist humanists or with so-called "alienated" youth:

I have given up my pen for a gun;
You still sit in the Coffee House
Discussing stagnation . . .
Where are the prophets of youth
Who declare everyone [other than themselves]
A Fascist . . .
I play my role in history
Leaving a new topic for you to discuss
"What is more important:
The crisis of language or the call of your dying neighbors?"[18]

The examples can be multiplied from other contexts. A number of poets wrote moving poems about the 1943 famine in Bengal, but only a radical humanist like the Bengali poet Samar Sen[19] or the Hindi poet Bacchan[20] challenged the starving Bengali to demand his bread by force. Only they could see why not only the British but also the Indian capitalist thrived on the hunger of the people.

Like Socialist Realists all over the world, the Hindi poets of this tradition have firm faith in the Marxian interpretation of history, including the inevitable victory of the forces of Socialism. This is obvious from the

poems of Shivamangal Singh "Suman" written during the worst days of World War II.[21] Naresh Mehta's "Samay devatā" (The Time God), Girija Kumar Mathur's "Habs desh" (The African Nation) and "Aisia kā jāgaran" (The Awakening of Asia), Shamshar Bahadur Singh's "Aman kā rāg" (The Song of Peace) and "Chīn" (China, Nagarjun's "Lumumba", Suman's "Naī āg hai" (A New Flame), and Kedarnath Agrawal's poem on Vietnam have basically the same historical perspective. Referring to the revolutionary spirit of the Vietnamese, Agrawal says:

> It is not self-born
> It has not come about automatically
> Man has brought it about
> Because of the force of Time
> And direction [of history].[22]

What makes the Indian realist different from his counterpart abroad is his use of imagery drawn from Indian folklore, myths and legends. In some cases these images are very rich and complex, as, for instance, in the fantasies of Gajanan Madhav Muktibodh. In some they lack subtlety and can be compared to the imagery of the medieval European morality plays -- the capitalists and imperialists representing the forces of evil, the proletariat representing the forces of goodness. The point which interests us is to see how the Indian realists react when the issues are not so clearcut. For instance, when the Chinese army marched into Indian territory in 1962, Nagarjun reacted very sharply:

> You may call us whatever you like,
> But what are you, if not an expansionist?
> Aren't you a victim of blind nationalism?
> Don't you think the Mongols are a superior race?
> O Blind Mandhata of Red China!
> Why didn't you move towards Hongkong?
> Is Taiwan far away from you? . . .
> Will there ever be a Khrushchev in your country.
> Who will genuinely love world peace?[23]

In other poems, Nagarjun satirized those Indian Communists who hestitated in condemning China and demanded that the Party debate the international role of the Indian proletariat.[24] To him the issue was very clear: the Chinese were not real Communists; they were "the lice in the beard of Marx," "the cat which killed the pigeon of peace," and wounded "the bald head of Lenin." Another Marxist poet, Rajeev Saxena, reacted somewhat the same way when the USSR intervened militarily in Czechoslovakia:

> Suddenly the demon-like mouth of the tank
> Swallowed up the shining red star
> And I am crying in the darkness . . .
> O, Yevtushenko, I am angry . . .
> Are the Czarist Lords
> Still sitting in Moscow?[25]

Unexpected behavior on the part of a Socialist state does not lead these poets to condemn Socialism; it simply hurts them when they realize that remnants of imperialism and narrow nationalism still rear their ugly heads. This makes them somewhat pessimistic. In the same poem Saxena says:

> Will truth always come out
> Only after the death of the rulers?
> Will it always be the synonym
> For those in power?
> Will truth never come to power?

However, their pessimism is temporary and is fundamentally different from the pessimism of idealist humanists, for these poets have not lost their capacity to "light up the fire" and challenge "the arrogant one in power."

We will make a very brief reference to the attitude of these poets as regards the communal riots in pre-partition India and the Indo-Pakistan conflicts in subsequent years. Unlike others, they do not take it to be a case of lack of compatibility between the Hindus and the Muslims. It was a clear design of the colonial powers to "divide and rule," and even now it is these colonial powers who go on arming Pakistan to the teeth to maintain the so-called balance of power in South Asia. Some poets just regret it,[26] some make fun of the Pakistani rulers for not understanding the game.[27]

One field in which the Socialist Realists of Hindi poetry excel is satire. The tradition of satire which was enriched by Bharatendu Harishchandra and other poets of his circle was weakened during the Dwivedi and *chāyāvādi* periods, but the radical humanists used it as a handy weapon against the Hindu sectarians and hypocrites. Surya Kānt Tripathi "Nirala," the most uncompromising genius of modern Hindi literature, wrote several very good satires against Hindu orthodoxy.[28] He did not spare the opportunist politicians and Gandhians either.[29] His *Kukurmuttā* (The Mushroom) is a satire on the upper classes of Indian society. The mushroom[30] grows wild close to the dirty water channel running out of the mud hut of a maid, while the rose has been carefully grafted and nurtured in the garden of the Nobob. The mushroom has no respect for the rose because -- unlike the rose -- it does not depend on others' services, and it is also more useful to humans than the rose. The rose is conceited, while the mushroom has a sense of self-esteem which draws admiration even from the rose.

The failure of the Congress leaders to live up to their ideology and to fulfill the promises made during the days of the freedom struggle provided rich material for the satires of Nagarjun. He makes fun of Bhagat Singh for not being a Congressman:

> How dumb you were, how low was your IQ!
> You couldn't understand the voice of Gandhi;
> Had you followed him, you would have been a minister
> Or, at least, a vice-chancellor after your retirement.[31]

Poems like "Take kī muskan" (A Smile Worth a Rupee), "Ao rānī ham dhoyeṅge palai" (O Queen, I Will Carry Your Palanquin), "We aur tum" (They and You), "Pānch putra bhārat matāke" (Five Sons of Mother India) are examples of Nagarjun's varied style. The following poem captures the attitude of the ruling Congress Party very accurately"

> The buds of independence have come out; they will
> bloom in five years.
> The fruits will take another five years; please let
> Pantji play on the swing.
> Why don't you eat less for five years?
> Why don't you swallow your suffering for another ten
> or fifteen?
> What's the harm in throwing dust into your eyes
> If they are your own?
> After all, the buds of independence have come out,
> The fruit will take some time; please, let Pantji
> play on the swing.[32]

Kedarnath Agrawal,[33] Ram Vilas Sharma,[34] Upendranath Ashk, Kanhaiya and Shankar Shailendra have also some very good satires to their credit. Written in highly colloquial Hindi, these satires have been used as purposeful "tools" for sharpening public opinion.[35]

We have not made any attempt to show how successful the poetry of Socialist Realism has been in Hindi. It is possible to go into a few successful cases, and also into cases where radical humanists are less successful as poets than idealist humanists, but we will not make any such attempt here. Instead, we will look into some of the poems of Pant and Nirala, who started as romantic poets but was converted to critical or radical humanism. Of the two, Pant was closer to Marxism than Nirala, but that does not add to the humanist sensibility of his poems. In "Wo buṛhā" (That Old Man), Pant presents the picture of an old man, "his shrivelled skin" wrapping "the weak frame of his bones" and "loose nets of dry veins." He comes to the door of the poet for a handful of alms!

> He sits and salutes with his forehead on the floor,
> For a moment he longs even to disappear
> From this earth.[36]

He gets some money and goes out, leaving the poet with

> . . . a ghoul,
> a polluted shadow of hell,
> The man in him is slain, perhaps
> By all that ceaseless suffering.

Nirala's "Bhikshuk" (The Beggar) presents initially a similar picture, but the end is very different:

With a heart broken by great suffering,
Ruefully he comes . . .
The pit of his stomach clings to his back . . .
Kneading his stomach with his left hand,
Holding out the right for mercy . . .
When hunger withers his lips,
What does he get
From the donors, the dispensers of his fate?
Standing on the road he licks the left overs
On the garbage heap,
Contending with dogs ready to snatch it away.[37]

This presents not only the picture of a beggar, but of a social system which has reduced him to the status of a dog. He does not have to use animal imagery to bring the point home: it emerges out of the poem itself. Chelyshev (1970) considers "Wo burha" a very good example of Pant's critical realism. We wonder what he would think of "Bhikshuk." Without doubting Pant's sincerity of feelings for the downtrodden, we wish to emphasize that he always seems to be looking at them from a distance. In "Do bacche" (Two Children) Pant looks down from his house on a hilltop and finds two "plump, naked, comely, and dark-skinned" untouchable children playing in his courtyard. They are screaming like monkeys, yet he likes them; after all, "they are man's offspring." Later on, in this poem, Pant rejects the old notion of body being "the soul's abode" and asserts the supremacy of humanity over everything else. There is no flaw in his argument, but the feeling conveyed in the first part of the poem fails to create an atmosphere of genuine concern. Hence, when he concludes by saying:

Why doesn't mutual relation bind man to man
And create better humans on this earth?[38]

We feel that ideology has been imposed upon the poem rather than growing out of it. Nirala's "Wo torati patthar" (Breaking Stones), on the other hand, has a more suggestive picture of a woman breaking stones under the burning June sun. There is no attempt on the part of the poet to impose any conclusion; the lines speak for themselves:

Seeing me looking at her,
She cast a glance at the mansion,
At her tattered clothes, then at me --
The glance of uncomplaining suffering --
She trembled for a moment,
A drop of sweat fell down her forehead.
The next moment she was back at work,
A sitar well-tuned, a life in harmony,
Singing
"I break the stones."[39]

The comparison between a couple of poems of Pant and Nirala has been made to suggest a similar trend on a wider scale. The gap between the poets who are upper-class humanist intellectuals and those who share the experiences of

poverty with the Indian masses is significantly wide. We have earlier referred to Bacchan's *Bangāl kā kāl* (The Bengal Famine), a powerful poem, but nowhere does the poet succeed in conveying the kind of felt experience which Nagarjun's "Akāl aur uske bād" (Famine and After) does:

For many days
The hearth wept, the grinding stone stood desolate.
For many days
The one-eyed bitch dozed by its side.
For many days
The lizard wandered the walls.
For many days
The rats, too, starved.

After many days
There is some grain in the household.
After many days
Rings of smoke rise above the courtyard.
After many days
The crow preens his wings.
After many days
Life in the eyes of the family shines.

One significant difference between Hindi or Indian literature in general and European literature is that radical humanism came in India earlier than critical realism; whereas in European literature, particularly in French and Russian, it followed critical realism. A switchover from critical realism to Socialist Realism in not as easy a task as a switchover from idealistic humanism to radical humanism. Opinions may differ over whether Socialist Realism is a higher form of realism than critical realism, but there is less disagreement about the superiority of naturalism and realism over romanticism and idealism. A critical realist may find it difficult to reconcile himself to the emphasis on the goals of Socialist Realism; an idealist realist may, on the other hand, improve the quality of his writing by being a critical humanist or a Socialist Realist, for this entails being more concrete and precise and, perhaps, more suggestive than he was before. We do not mean that the change to realism makes his poetry better automatically but given the singleness of poetic criteria, good Socialist poetry is likely to be "more powerful, more lasting than any entirely internal poem."[40] A comparison of the later humanist poems of Pant with his earlier romantic poems supports his remark. Another interesting comparison is between the poems of Muktibodh and those of other experimentalists of the *prayogwādi* group. Muktibodh has the poetic richness of other experimentalists and an artistic complexity which portrays the complexity of life itself. His concern with an intense experience of life, an ability to look at that experience objectively in order to transform it into fantasy and power to convey that fantasy creatively makes him different from other poets of his group.[41]

In recent years Hindi poetry has moved more and more towards critical realism. There is no going back to the idealist humanism of the revolutionary romanticists. New groups of experimentalists emerge now and then, but only those who have some sort of realist approach seem to have sustained influence.

FOOTNOTES

1. A *mukarī* is a quatrain in which the import of the first three lines is given a new and significant twist in the last line which reveals the real sense.

2. Agyeya, ed., "Pusharini," *Tār saptak*, p. 47.

3. We have used the term "revolutionary romanticists" for this group of poets to emphasize the fact that they had a romantic -- as against realistic -- attitude towards Indian history and also towards freedom movements in India. If the term "romanticism" is used in a narrower sense to mean poetry of nature-worship only, these poets cannot be called romantic.

4. See prefaces to Nirala's *Anāmikā* (1922), Prasad's *Bharnā* (1927), Pant's *Pallav* (1928) and Mahadevi Verma's *Nihār* (1930). Their "new humanism" should not, however, be confused with "neo-humanism," a movement in American criticism. The neo-humanists did not approve of the romantic nature-worship of the nineteenth-century poets like Wordsworth, Coleridge, Emerson, or Whitman; the *chāyāwādi* new humanists, on the other hand, drew inspiration from English romantic poets like Wordsworth, Keats and Shelley.

5. All the extracts are from the Manifesto of the IPWA as published in *Left Review*, II (1936-37) and as quoted by Carlo Coppola in "The Indian Progressive Writers' Association: The European Phase" in this volume; see pp. 1-34.

6. Russian literary critics have been using the term "critical realism" to cover all bourgeois writings compatible with a Socialist point of view. In a way "Socialist Realism" is regarded as merely "a higher stage of critical realism" (Arvon; 1973). A basic difference between critical realism and Socialist Realism is that, though the exponents of the former have a clear view of the problems of their time, they do not necessarily see a solution to them. It often results in a pessimistic or passive attitude towards life. A Socialist Realist, on the other hand, is basically optimistic. He is not only interested in "being based on a concrete socialist perspective, but also in using this perspective to describe the forces working towards socialism from the inside. Since perspective . . . plays a decisive role as a selective principle in literature, these considerations are of no small importance in forming the style of socialist realism." (Lukacs, 1964).

7. See Premchand, "Sāhitya kā uddeshya" (The Goal of Literature) in *Kuch Vicār*, p. 5-25.

8. *Yugvāṇi* (The Voice of the Age), p. 47.

9. "Sankīrṇ bhautikwādiyoṅ ke prati," *Yugwaṇi*, p. 48. Also see Preface to *Yugwāṇi*, p. Kh.

10. "Marks ke prati" (To Marx), *ibid.* p. 44.

11. *Chidāmbarā*, p. 18.

12. *Uttarā*, p. 28.

13. *Lokāyatan*, pp. 375, 377, 382.

14. *Dharmyug* (weekly, Bombay), June 20, 1971, p. 19; English translation, *Mainstream* (slightly changed), New Delhi, July 31, 1971.

15. "Ek bastī jāl rahī hai" (A Village in Flames), *Dharmyug*, May 2, 1971, p. 19.

16. "Agnidesh" (The Country in Flames), *Dharmyug*, 1971.

17. "Padmā", *Dharmyug*, 1971; English translation, *Mainstream* (slightly changed), New Delhi, August 14, 1971.

18. "Bangla desh ke ek rachanākār kā patra" (A Letter from a Poet in Bangla Desh), *Dharmyug*, May 16, 1971, p. 35.

19. Samar Sen, *The Complete Poems of Samar Sen*, trans. Pritish Nandy, p. 60.

20. *Bangāl kā kāl*, pp. 52-53, 79.

21. See Suman's "Das hafte das mās ban gaye" (Ten Weeks Turned into Ten Months); "Māsko ab bhī dūr hai" (Moscow Is Still Far Away); "Lālsenā kā gīt" (The Song of the Red Army). Also Nawin's "Dhanya sabhi rusī janagaṇa" (Congratulations, O Russians); Ram Vilas Sharma's "Jallād kī maut" (The Death of the Hangman); Narendra Sharma's "Cetāwanī" (A Warning).

22. *Āg kā āinā*, pp. 90-91.

23. "Kuch aur nahīṅ, hindustānī hūṅ mahaz," *Dharmyug*, December, 1962, p. 19.

24. "Kattar kāmredubāc"; "Kāmyunizm ke pande", in *ibid.*

25. Rajeev Saxena, "Yevtushenko ke nām" (To Yevtushenko), *Dharmyug*, December 15, 1968, p. 14.

26. Kaifi Azmi, "Bangla desh", English trans. in *Mainstream*, July 3, 1971; Sajjad Zaheer, "The Dictator", *ibid.*

27. Prabhakar Machwe, "Tānāshahoṅ kī turbat", *Dharmyug*, October 10, 1965, p. 27; Nagarjun, "Bhutto kī ungalī, chau kā violin", *Dharmyug*, October 17, 1965.

28. Suryakant Tripathi Nirala, "Rāje ne apnī rakhawālī kī" (31-32), "Garm pakawri" (44-45), "Premsangīt" (46-47), "Deputy saheb āye" (94-95) in *Naye patte*.

29. Nirala, "Manhagu manhagā huā" in *Naye patte*, pp. 106-110; "Na aye vir jawaharlāl", *Belā*, p. 64; "Bāpu tum andā khate yadi", *Gīt gung*, p. 63; "Māsko dialogues", *Naye patte*, pp. 25-26.

30. The term *kukurmuttā* literally means "that which grows on the dog's urine." It is this supposedly undignified origin of the mushroom that makes it insignificant in the eyes of the rose.

31. "Bhagat singh" (as quoted by Ranjeet, 1971).

32. As quoted in *Mānav*, 1968.

33. *Āg kā āinā*, pp. 27, 45, 46, 67.

34. "Satyan shivam sundaram," *Tār saptak*, pp. 252-254.

35. "Sāhitya meṅ yathārthwād," *Samay samay par*, p. 131.

36. *Grāmyā*, trans. Mukhopadhyaya, *et al.*, 1969.

37. *Apara*, 67.

38. *Gramya*.

39. *Aparā*, 29-30.

40. Preface to Bold (1970).

41. Muktibodh (1971).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Agrawal, Kedarnath, *Phūl nahīṅ rang bolāte haiṅ.* Allahabad: Parimal Prakashan, 1965.

_____, *Āg kā ainā.* Allahabad: Parimal Prakashan, 1970.

_____, *Samay samay par.* Allahabad: Parimal Prakashan, 1970.

Agyeya, H. S. Vātsyāyan, ed., *Tār saptak.* Calcutta: Bhartiya Gyanpeeth, (first edition 1943).

Arvon, Henri, *Marxist Esthetics.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1973.

Bacchan, Haribansh Rai, *Bangāl kā kāl*, Delhi: Rajpal and Sons (first edition 1946).

Bold, Alan, ed., *The Penguin Book of Socialist Verse.* Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1970.

Chilyshev, Evgenii, *Sumitrānandan pant.* Delhi: Raj Kamal, 1970.

Gupta, Prakāsh Chandra, *Āj kā hindī sāhitya.* Delhi: National Publishing House, 1966.

Lukacs, Georg, *Realism in Our Time.* New York: Harper and Row, 1964.

Mallik, Hafeez, "The Marxist Literary Movement in India and Pakistan" in *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 26:4:649-664.

Manav, Vishwambhar, *Nayī kavitānaye Kavi.* Allahabad Lokbharati, 1968.

Mishra, Shivakumar, *Pragatiwād.* Delhi: Raj Kamal, 1966.

Mishra, Vidyaniwas, ed., *Modern Hindi Poetry: An Anthology.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1965.

Muktibodh, Gajanan Madhav, *Chānd kā muṅh terhā hai.* Calcutta: Bhartiya Gyanpeeth, 1964.

_____, *Naye sāhitya kā saundarya shāstra.* Delhi: Radhakrishna Prakashan, 1971.

Nagarjun, *Pyāsī pathrāyī ānkheṅ*, Allahabad: Yatri Prakashan, 1962.

_____, *Shatarangoṅ Kiraṇen Wālin*, Allahabad: Yatri Prakashan, 1964.

Nirala, Surya Kant Tripathi, *Belā*. Allahabad: Nirupama Prakashan, 1943.

_____, *Naye patte*. Allahabad: Nirupama Prakashan, 1946.

_____, *Kukurmuttā*. Allahabad: Lok Bharati, 1969 (1st ed. 1942).

_____, "Twenty Eight Poems" trans. David Rubin, *The Hudson Review*, XXVI, 1, 1973.

Pant, Sumitranandan, *Yugvanī*. Delhi: Raj Kamal, 1939.

_____, *Grāmyā*. Allahabad: Leader Press, 1940.

Premchand, "Sahitya kā uddeshya" in *Kuch vicār*, Allahabad: Saraswati Press, 1939.

Rai, Amrit, *Sah chintan*. Allahabad: Sarjana Prakashan, 1967.

Ranjeet, *Hindī kī pragatiwādi kavitā*. Delhi: Hindi Sahitya Sansar, 1971.

Rubin, David, "Nirala and the Renaissance of Hindi Poetry", *Journal of Asian Studies*, 31:1:111-126.

Sarin, Dharam Paul, *Influence of Political Movements on Hindi Literature*, (1906-1947). Chandigarh: Punjab University Publications, 1967.

Schaff, Adam, Chandigarh: *Marxism and the Human Individual*, New York, McGraw Hill, 1970.

Sen, Samar, *The Complete Poems of Samar Sen*, trans. Pritish Nandi (Calcutta: Dialogue Publications, 1970).

Sharma, Ram Vilas, *Pragatishīl sāhitya kī samasyāyeṅ*. Agra: Vinod Pustak Mandir, 1957.

_____, *Nirālā*. Agra: Shivlal Agrawal, 1962.

Singh, Namwar, *Kavitā ke naye pratimān*. Delhi: Raj Kamal, 1968.

Singh, Shamsher Bahadur, *Do āb*. Benares: Saraswati Press, Benares, 1948.

_____, Kuch kavitāyeṅ, Delhi: Raj Kamal.

_____, Kuch aur kavitāyen, Delhi: Raj Kamal, 1961.

Suman, Shivmangal Singh, *Vindya -- Himālaya*. Delhi: Atmaram, 1966.

_____, *Vishwāsh baṛhtā hī gayā*. Delhi: Atmaram, 1967 (2nd ed.).

Trivedi, Ram Prasad, *Pragatiwādi samikshā*. Kanpur: Grantham, 1964.

COMMENT ON MOHAN RAKESH AND SOCIALIST REALISM

Frederick W. Blackwell

Washington State University

Although it is often suspect to consider external evidence in literary analysis, and even more so to ask after the author's intent, the question involved herein is Mohan Rakesh vis-à-vis Socialist Realism, not, strictly speaking, a critical analysis of his literature. Further, in Socialist Realism itself intent is important -- perhaps all-important. Therefore, this paper will take into account Rakesh's own views on his works and his statements as to intent, as well as aspects of his literature.

In a recent interview Rakesh made some statements that indicate he is not a Socialist Realist; particularly, his abnegation of "pretensions about having any message to give" (to the point that he also stated that "talking about the good of society or the welfare of this and that are misnomers -- misused and meaningless"), his rejection of the idea that there's a viable philosophy for the times, and his description of his own literary concern -- "the mood of the times, and not portrayal of physical realities." It is also noteworthy that his topical interest is that class with which he has "personal experience," the urban middle class; he admittedly has little knowledge or interest about the upper and lower classes (rural as well as urban).[1]

While Rakesh's themes are to some degree social, they are not sociological; they evince no direct interest in the nature of the social order, nor in social change; his works do not reflect that Socialist Realist motivation of "ris[ing] to the greatness of [the] theme of man changing himself through the process of changing nature and creating new economic forces."[2]

He seems to accept, at least as an artist, the milieu in which his characters exist. His focus is upon the interpersonal relationships of people of a certain class, especially the breakdown that occurs between or among people close to one another. Conceivably it could be argued that there must be, or can be construed, an underlying economic explanation to the situations that the author develops; but that is truistic, and not explicitly a part of the literary structure in his works. In Rakesh's approach the question of approval or rejection of the social system simply does not arise; his interest is in the conflicts which develop between or among characters within a given situation, but not with the social system itself.

In looking at Rakesh's literature in respect to Socialist Realism, the observation -- for purposes of understanding and comparison -- need not be exhaustive; this commentary, therefore, will be restricted to four of his major works, the ones which seem to be most discussed: three plays and a novel -- two of which have historical settings, and two contemporary.[3]

The two plays which have historical settings developed, according to the author (interview in *Enact*, May 1971), from his interest in classical Sanskrit drama; specifically, the works of Kalidasa and Ashvaghosha. But the plays are by no means merely modern adaptations; in fact one, *Āṣāḍh kā ek din*, has Kalidasa as the principal character. Nor are they historical romances, like some earlier twentieth-century Hindi dramas. Their importance lies in that while the setting is historical, the situations and conflicts have meanings which are modern, or perhaps even timeless in the sense that they cannot be confined to any one period (this, of course, is a technique used by other playwrights, including some in Hindi, e.g., Lakshminarain Lal). In both plays the focus is upon a man torn between two worlds. For Nanda, in *Laharoṅ ke rājhans*, it is between the abnegation of the path of the Buddha and the acceptance of life as a positive force and reality, as represented by his wife, Sundari. The connotation is that abnegation is not necessarily confined to a religious monasticism: there are other, twentieth-century types of absolutist paths. For Kalidasa in *Āṣāḍh kā ek din*, the choice is between creativity -- but with poverty and lack of recognition -- and power with recognition -- but with a loss of creativity (although, as it happens, not of productivity; see the latter part of the excerpt from the play, below). Significantly, both choose wrongly -- for themselves and for their women. Both find themselves in situations which they cannot control, and which are destructive to themselves, and consequently to their personal relationships.

There is nothing in either play to indicate a desire to change the socio-economic system, or of even facing it as a condition possible of change; there is the possibility of opting out, through renunciation, but the system or society is, in a general sense, accepted, as there, like life itself. There is an uneasiness, a sort of feeling of hollowness, in regard to society, which is experienced by the central figure, and hence, conveyed to the reader; but this is an existential malaise, not a sociological discontent.

Though the settings for the two plays are hardly that of "the urban middle class," the situations are akin to today's -- particularly in regard to the breakdown in interpersonal relations. R. L. Nigam, preparing a monograph on Rakesh, has noted: "The outer form of these plays may be historical, but their inner meaning is contemporary . . . it is not so much a historical reality as the reality of our own lives that has been caught in these plays." He also explains that Rakesh's "choice of apparently historical themes and historical personages seems to be determined by . . . necessity of finding a dramatically adequate vehicle of expression."[4] Rakesh, in the interview in *Enact*, says that such was his purpose. In short, his use of historical setting is one of dramatic device. The characters are symbolic, the situations allegorical.

Kalidasa's is an especially interesting case; in the *Enact* interview, Rakesh states that he "conceived the play as a writer's predicament, with the forces around him leading him towards such compromises as could kill his very personality as a writer," which "was both the crisis of the age as well as my own personal crisis" (when he was holding full-time teaching or editorial positions). While the reader may well have less sympathy for Kalidasa than does the author (as he recognizes, in the interview) -- the text, nevertheless, bears out Rakesh as to the hero's predicament. Toward the end of the

play, Kalidasa, now famous and a son-in-law of the royal family, stopping in his native village on the way to assume the governorship of Kashmir, explains his predicament to Mallika, the girl he left behind (from the *Enact* translation):

> Time and again I wanted to make myself believe that the shortcomings were in me, not in the situation. Then if I could change myself, I would be happy. But that was not to happen. Then if I could change myself, I would be happy. But that was not to happen. I could not change, nor could I be happy. For someone else this atmosphere and life would have been very enjoyable. For me it was not. Administrative duties conflicted with my work. Time after time it seemed to me that I had entered the endeavour unrightfully because of my love of power and comfort, and that I had moved away from that work I should have been doing. Whenever my eyes looked out to the distant horizon, I was struck by how far away from greatness I had moved. I went on telling myself that, if not today, then tomorrow I would get control of the situation and divide myself equally between the two types of work, but instead, I was shaped and controlled by the immediate situation.
>
> The tomorrow which I waited for never came and slowly I disintegrated, just disintegrated. The day came when I realized that I was completely ruined. I was no longer the same person who had insight into what was great and glorious.

And later within the same speech:

> People think that living in that life and atmosphere I have written a great deal. But I know that while living there I wrote nothing. Whatever I wrote was a recollection of life here. The Himalayas are the backdrop for "Kumarasambhav" and you are the austere Uma. The pain of the yaksha in "Meghdut" is the pain I felt at being separated from you and the pain of the yaksha's wife is your pain, though I imagined myself here and you in Ujjaini. You were before me in the form of Shakuntala. Whenever I made an effort to write I repeated the tale of our lives over and over. If I turned away from this and tried to write, the works were lifeless.

This is a personal matter for the creative artist, which could happen in any society. One would have to go well outside the text, and structure, to deduce social comment.

As to the question of the village setting in *Āsāḍh kā ek din*, it seems to be a symbolic contrast (the simple life, poor but free and uncomplicated) to the court (with its glories, but also compromises and complications). Here the court represents not so much the city, but the fetters and shaping forces which institutions effect upon the creative artist. The contrast is not the Gandhian or Premchand village-city contrast which is common to much twentieth-century Hindi literature, and replete among Indian intellectuals -- that feeling that somehow villages are more "Indian" and wholesome than cities.[5] Neither of these plays represents a call for social change, Gandhian or otherwise.

The two works with contemporary settings -- *Ādhe adhūre*, a play, and *Andhere band kamare*, a novel -- are both set in a city, Delhi. But in neither do the proletariat or the slums play a role; the focus is entirely middle-class. Financial or economic conditions have impact upon the settings -- more so in the play, which deals with a lower middle-class family, than in the novel, which is concerned with an upper middle-class couple; but in neither is there analysis or explicit comment in regard to the socio-economic conditions underlying the situation.

There is a distinctive difference between the two works in the situations and their characters: it is the difference between the lower middle-class and the upper middle-class -- a difference sharp enough to make them, in economic and cultural senses, separate classes in almost any society; but this distinction is magnified in urban India. In the novel the central characters exhibit financial difficulties only while in Europe; in Delhi they are quite well-off. The characters in the play probably would not even dream of going to Europe; it is all they can do to keep their heads above water and there would appear to be, as well, no energy -- or at least concern -- for cultural interests. They typify the contemporary condition, as described by one observer:

> The struggles the middle class people in the cities have to endure for survival change their basic attitude toward life. Before the war, middle class people led many cultural and political activities. Now, with the growing burden of problems, the high cost of living, the scarcity of housing, and the unbearable physical environment, the overall outlook and broad perspective of the middle class is changing. They are so engrossed in their daily problems that they no longer have any interest in the cultural aspects of life. The middle-class survives because of its tenacity, but it is not affected by the events in the world.[6]

All this is there, assumed and implicit in the setting; but it is important to note that it remains implicit -- it is not exploited by the playwright, other than to bring dramatic impact upon the interpersonal relations.

The structure of the play makes it clear that the situation and the characters are meant to typify: the characters are, "man in a black suit," "first man," "second man," "third man," "fourth man," "boy," "woman," "older girl," and "younger girl"; the first five roles listed -- the men -- are all to be played by the same actor; at the very outset the "man in the

black suit," who delivers the prologue, makes it clear that the situation and characters are indeed very typical:

> *Once again . . . the same thing all over again . . .* Perhaps you think I have a definite function in this play. . . . But you would be wrong . . . for *I am amorphous* . . . and everything concerned with me, including this play, is as *undefined* as I am . . . . Perhaps it would be enough to say I am the man you bump into by chance in the street. You stare at me for a moment but you're not in the least concerned with me or with my life. . . . You're not concerned with me because I too am not concerned with you. Yet, as two people whose paths converge, we share the same identity. . . . So *you could be here in my place now and I could be in yours*. . . . The fact is that I am every one of you in one way or another and this is why, whether on or off the stage, I have *no single identity.*[7]

Change the particular family, he further explains, and the particular circumstances would change; or reverse the roles of the woman and himself (i.e., first through fourth man), and it would only be that -- a reversal of roles. The basic situation would remain, or, as Rakesh puts it in the *Enact* interview, "the predicament of life will remain the same" -- the common, unchanging condition in contemporary urban society: "Once again . . . the same thing all over again." Rakesh himself refers to the situation as one of "ordinariness" (*Enact* interview).

Before *Ādhe adhūre* Rakesh wrote two "Seed Plays," as he describes them (*Enact* interview), which were "studies or ordinary middle class life," and attempts "to discover . . . the absurdity of reality." And there is in this play, from the very first line ("Once again . . . the same thing all over again" -- "*phir ek bār, phir se yahī śuruāt*. . . ."), a tone like that of Beckett or Ionesco, both of whom, Rakesh states in the *Thousand Suns* interview, he admires. Indeed, the approach seems to have far more in common with the Theater of the Absurd than with Socialist Realism. The fact that the situation -- the rupture, or disintegration, or personal relationships within a family -- may have socio-economic causes underlying it, or can be analyzed sociologically, does not concern Rakesh as playwright; what does concern him is what *is*. He has put it: "I really cannot go beyond the point of my direct confrontation with life. At that stage I go behind the wings and leave the man in the auditorium to deal with the situation as he likes" (*Enact* interview).

Finally, the novel. As in the play just discussed, the tone is set at the very beginning:

> In nine years faces change a lot. In some people, the change is so great that the very contours seem to have undergone a *metamorphosis*.
>
> . . . .
>
> Of course, there were some who greeted me with a warm handshake, but I felt *a wall* stood between us all the

> same. We could not come closer even if we wanted to. There were moments when even known faces seemed to lose their familiarity -- they looked *alien.*[8]

The terms "metamorphosis," "wall" and "alien" are more than merely descriptive: they are symbolic of the relationship between the central figures, Harbans and Nilima, his wife. Here there's really not even an underlying economic situation; financial difficulties do occur for them in Europe, true, but their general financial condition is secure. Again the writer's concern is observation of interpersonal relations; or, as he put it (in the *Thousand Suns* interview): "the conflict of values between husband and wife."

There's something almost melancholy or even nostalgic about this work. The couple, the disintegration of their relationship, the structure of the work itself, are reminiscent of Fitzgerald's *Tender Is the Night* -- at least to me; the author himself told me last summer that he has never read Fitzgerald. It's probably that the situation is, again, typical or ordinary, and if I were more familiar with O'Hara I might possibly find a similarity there. Harbans and Nilima's relationship is quite like the suburbia situations that were often explored (and exploited) in novels, plays, movies, and television in this country in the fifties and sixties. And as with many of those works, a moralistic statement could be made about the society in which the situation is set; but, again, it would be extra-literary, and simply is not the concern of the work -- in content or structure -- or its writer.

If Marx was right, that a work of art cannot be understood without reference to the historical forces which produced the society and culture from which the work and its creator came, then, indeed, a Socialist Realist viewpoint would increase our understanding of Rakesh's work; but that's another question. The point here is that Mohan Rakesh is not a Socialist Realist. He is not concerned with the relation of society and culture, of the pros and cons of the economic structure -- at least as an artist. He simply does not consider the question within the purview of his art. He observes and he describes the confrontation of people with one another, and their relationships. He leaves the opinions, one might even say conclusions, to his audience; he has no didactic purpose, at least in a dialectic or moral sense.

But, as with all art, we do learn from him, for he deals with experience typical of human life -- at least of urban middle class life -- and touches that chord of recognition within us. Perhaps his strength can best be described by quoting from the *Enact* interview his future literary goals -- to "go into further abstractions based on my discovery of larger areas of common human experience."

FOOTNOTES

1. *Thousand Suns* (Spring 1971), pp. 35-38; another interview appears in *Enact* (May 1971; a concise drama monthly, which does not have pagination).

2. Ralph Fox, *The Novel and the People* (New York: International Publishers, 1945), p. 26. First published posthumously in 1937.

3. *Lahron ke rājhans* (Delhi: Rajkamal Prakashan, 1970; 1st edition 1963), translated as *The Great Swans of the Waves* by Paul Jacob and Meena Williams, with a "Preface to the Revised Edition," *Enact*, Mohan Rakesh Memorial Number, 73-74 (January-February 1973; and reprinted separately); *Āṣāḍh kā ek din* (Delhi: Rajpal and Sons, special edition, 1969), translated as *One Day in Āshāḍha* by Sarah K. Ensley, *Enact* (August-September 1969; and reprinted separately); *Ādhe adhūre* (Delhi: Radhakrishnan Prakashan, 1971; copyright 1969), translated as *Half-way House* by Bindu Batra, *Enact* (May 1971; and reprinted separately); *Andhere band kamare* (a novel; Delhi: Rajkamal Prakashan, 1966; 1st edition, 1961), translated as *Lingering Shadows* by Jai Ratan and edited by Carlo Coppola (Delhi: Hindi Pocket Books, n. d.); there are also some short stories, another novel, a collection of essays, and a travelogue. Rakesh has indicated that his pursuit now is drama, not fiction. In regard to the translations, there could be some discussion,; but for the purposes of this paper they are quite satisfactory.

4. R. L. Nigam, "Playwright in Perspective," *Enact* (May 1971; unpaged); condensed from a monograph in preparation."

5. See Eleanor Zelliot, "Literary Images of the Modern Indian City," in *Urban India: Society, Space, and Image*, edited by Richard G. Fox (Durham: Duke University Program in Comparative Studies on Southern Asia, 1970), pp. 215-23; and Edward Shils, *The Intellectual Between Tradition and Modernity: The Indian Situation* (The Hague: Mouton, 1961), pp. 61ff.

6. Mahadeo L. Apte, "Reflections of Urban Life in Marathi Literature," in *Urban India* (cited above), p. 207.

7. From the *Enact* translation (cited above); the italics are mine; the ellipses are partly mine, and partly punctuation used by the author and by the translator.

8. These are the first and third paragraphs of the paperback translation (cited above), p. 7; the italics are mine.

THE EVOLUTION OF YASHPAL FROM SOCIALIST REALIST TO HUMANIST

Corinne Friend

University of Pennsylvania

> I am often asked whether, since I do not belong to any Party, I have dissociated myself from politics. Dissociating oneself from politics means that one feels no relationship with existing conditions and the future of one's society and country. . . . I'm not that kind of ascetic. . . . I will do what I must through literature.[1]

The above quotation from Yashpal's autobiography concerns his decision, when he was released from prison in 1938, to transfer his commitment to social change from political activism to literature. He was freed after serving six years of a fourteen-year life term for revolutionary activities against the British. When he was captured in 1932, he was Commander-in-Chief of the Hindustan Socialist Republican Army, a Punjabi terrorist organization whose purpose was to overthrow both British rule and capitalism -- to establish Indian independence and Socialism. Since 1939 he has written almost fifty books including novels, essays, short stories, a play and a three-volume autobiography of his life as a revolutionary. His novel *Jhūṭhā sac* has been acclaimed as the greatest Hindi novel since *Godān*. In 1969 he won the *Soviet Land*-Nehru Award for fiction. In 1970 the Government of India decorated him with Padma Bhushan at the Republic Day ceremonies.

This paper is concerned with his evolution from a *Socialist Realist*[2] to his later views as a man who is deeply committed to Socialism as a political goal, but who recognizes the difference between Marxist theory and Soviet practice.

In his autobiography, Yashpal indicated that in 1938 he regarded the Communist Party of India as the natural successor to the Hindustan Socialist Republican Army -- superior because it was run along more scientific and sophisticated lines.[3] Nonetheless, he did not join the Communist Party or any other, but instead chose to pursue his vocation of effecting social and political change through writing.

His first novel, *Dādā kāmred* (Grandfather Comrade, 1941) was partly autobiographical. Many parts of the novel were thinly disguised incidents of his life in the Hindustan Socialist Republican Army, but the main thrust of the story line was the maturing of the political views of the hero, Harish, from terrorist to Marxist. The novel paralleled the development of Yashpal's thinking at the time concerning the Communist Party as the appropriate instrument for introducing Socialism into India. At the end of *Dādā kāmred*, Harish, a labor organizer, together with other organizers who have successfully led a strike, are charged and tried for murder and dacoity. Although they are innocent, he knows they will be found guilty because of the nature and inevitability of the class struggle. To publicize the issues and the reasons for their sacrifice, he addresses the court in this way:

> We have dedicated our lives to fight the unremitting oppression practiced by respectable capitalism in society. This court is dedicated to justice, but what is the nature of that justice? Laws are passed and institutions are created to perpetuate the rights and the rule of the capitalist class.
>
> In the eyes of this court and the government, justice consists of upholding those arrangements. The duty of this court is to decide whether we have conducted ourselves according to those rules. We want to change the system, and therefore the court may consider us criminals, but we are not guilty of the crimes of dacoity and murder.
>
> The court wants to charge us with the crime that money from the dacoity was found in our possession. The police can question anyone they wish. We urge the court to think about this: as a result of a three-month strike, four cloth mills claimed that they lost seven lakhs of rupees. The reason for the mills' loss was that they could not take advantage of the labor of the workers. Those mills have stolen crores of rupees produced by labor. What we want to know is this: Will the court investigate that dacoity too -- or will it not?[4]
>
> Because we want to change the institutions we consider unjust and which this court is duty-bound to uphold, we can be looked upon by the court as criminals. But the justice which looks upon all men as equals, the justice that gives to each man the right of all his labor and does not permit one man to seize the fruits of another's labor, in the sight of that justice and in the sight of human morality, we are innocent. We have complete faith that the justice which awards luxury to a few, while 99.9% of the people have no rights or means, will one day be changed, and that our sacrifice will make it happen.[5]

Yashpal's next novel *Deshdrohī* ("Traitor"), published in 1943, was in its political aspects a rationale of the turnabout in Communist Party policy in India during World War II when, after the German attack on Russia, the Party adopted the line that the "Imperialist-Fascist War" had been transformed into the "People's War." At the same time, the Congress Party launched its "Quit India" movement. Confronted with the choice of supporting nationalism or coming to the defense of Russia, the Communist Party chose the latter, and in so doing, earned the contempt of an important segment of the Congress Party and the people, who, thereafter, regarded Communists as traitors.

Yashpal himself took the view that the protection of Russia as a bastion of Socialism was of overriding importance. Nonetheless in *Deshdrohi*, he gave equal importance to the viewpoint of the Congress Socialists in their support of the "Quit India" movement. However, as expressed in the novel and as he believed, the Congress Socialist Party was foredoomed to failure in its efforts to introduce Socialism in the Congress platform. It was for this reason that Yashpal considered the Communist Party as the only alternative.

Dr. Khanna, the hero of the novel, after many adventures in Afghanistan and Russia, returns to India in the late 1930s as an underground Communist Party worker, while Shivnath, his boyhood friend who has served many years in jail for the manufacture of bombs to fight the British, is now a member of the Congress Socialist Party. Dr. Khanna has been ordered to convince political leaders of Congress that the "Quit India" movement is folly and that at this time the Congress should cooperate with the British to defend India.

> Khanna and Shivnath discussed national war policy many times. They could come to no agreement. Each one expressed his own viewpoint very earnestly. Shivnath got very excited and said, "The Communists are not concerned about India's subjection, but only about Russia's suffering. They want to sacrifice India's chance for freedom in order to help Russia."
>
> Khanna said, "The Communists do not love Russian soil. Their feeling is for Russian Socialism and its policy against imperialism. India's chance for self-determination will flow out of the success of that policy. Now it is Japan we fear the most. We can't leave the responsibility to the English to protect India from a Japanese invasion. We must protect our own country. We should take responsibility for fighting the war against Fascist invasion in cooperation with friendly nations. In that way we will get the right to rule ourselves. But it is necessary to convince friendly countries to our anti-Fascist policy. To offer our country as a gift to murderous Japan is to deal a death blow to the dream of freedom"
>
> Then the two friends stopped discussing policies and principles and went on to talk about the methods and practices of the parties. They did not disagree on the principles of Socialism, but they differed sharply on how it could be introduced into India successfully. Shivnath objected strongly to the fact that the Communists had decimated the Congress Socialist Party in order to strengthen their own party. Further, the Communists were establishing a political organization in competition with the National Congress organization

which was weakening the country's strength. But the greatest sin was that the Communist Party was not a purely Indian organization. Its policies were influenced by the International Communist Party.

Khanna said that he agreed with those objections, but that: "With the good of the people in mind, there was no other choice. From the economic viewpoint of the oppressed people, they had no choice other than to organize themselves separately from the oppressor class and its supporters. The oppressor class cannot think in terms of the right of self-determination for the oppressed. The meaning of *swarāj* to them is that they will get an even greater share than the foreign capitalists from the oppressed people in the country. When the freedom movement wins, it will not be because of the select few, but from the efforts of the 999 in a thousand. Why should the people be held down by the selfishness of the leadership of the oppressor class? It is an idle dream to imagine you can make Congress a Socialist power by organizing within it and by legal means. Awareness of the class struggle is not as great in the oppressed class as it is in the oppressor class. The reason is that the ruling class has education and wealth. The rules of Congress have made it illegal to try to build Socialist strength in the Congress even though the people may want it. All the means by which popular will is created is in the hands of the capitalists. They call the *Hay rotī* of the suffering people mean, selfish and conducive to class violence, and the movement which increases the rights of their own class they call the People's Swaraj, and they point out the sacrifices they make for it. If you can become part of the Congress movement only if you 'put your trust in God', then there is no limit to what fools can be made of people. . . ."[6]

In turn, Shivnath tried to enlist Khanna's help to persuade the Communists to support the "Quit India" movement on the grounds that an uprising, once started, would gain momentum and culminate in the revolution Khanna had been seeking until now. Khanna replied that the Communists were not in favor of revolution now until Japan was defeated. Shivnath suggested to Khanna that Communist concern about a Japanese invasion stemmed from their desire for a Russian victory -- no matter what the cost to India. Shivnath expressed the belief that if India declared itself free of the British Empire, Japan would not attack. To this Khanna replied:

"Then why, sir, did Japan invade China? Why were Indo-China, Korea, Mongolia and Manchuria swallowed up? Japan considers it her manifest destiny to bring all Asia under her rule. She has only been waiting for her

> opportunity. You should recognize our opportunity too. The big political commanders in Congress say: We will fight England, we will fight Japan and we will fight Germany too. Are you going to fight the whole world? What will you use for strength?"[7]

There are many other examples in *Deshdrohī* which point up Yashpal's commitment to Socialist Realism. He describes conditions of life in India, Afghanistan and Samarkand in the mid-1930s, contrasting the growth and vitality of Samarkand under Soviet rule, and the concern of the state for the welfare of the people with the poverty, stagnation and exploitation of Afghanistan and India. At the time he wrote *Deshdrohī*, Yashpal had not been out of India. While he makes some concession to the possibility of state coercion in Samarkand, it is only in connection with the state's insistence that the people have better health and education.[8] For example, his description of a sanitorium and children's house in Samarkand:

> White-uniformed nurses, smiling and competent, took care of the children and bed patients. The doctor noticed that except for half a dozen fair-skinned, blue-eyed nurses, the others had the ruddy coloring and dark eyes of Kazakh, Uzbeg and Tadjik girls. The mothers of those girls had never taken a step outside their houses without wearing *burqā* and *cādar*. They had been simply the movable property of their household. These girls, in fitted European clothing, thermometer in hand, went all over the hospital doing their work. Those [older] women were brought up never to touch the body of a man other than their husband or son. But these girls handled sick young men as though they were their own husband or son. And when the day's work was done, they ran down the electric-lighted road to play tennis or other games. Men were . . . now their partners, their soul-companions. They walked together arm in arm in friendship and intimacy. Considering the conditions in that country ten years earlier, the doctor was amazed.[9]

In comparing the capitalist and Communist world in their respective concerns for the people, Yashpal describes the work of Dr. Nuremberger, a refugee from Nazi Germany who was granted asylum in Russia:

> He [Dr. Nuremberger] devoted his entire life and derived his total satisfaction from research and its results. As a scientist, his interests did not lie in making money by putting new drugs on the market. In Germany, when he was studying pulmonary and bone diseases, he developed a preventive medicine. The pharmaceutical companies considered his research useless. He could not even test the effectiveness of his medicine. The drug manufacturers joked about his discovery, saying, "If I make your medicine, it will make the thousands of medicines on the market for tuberculosis worthless. If someone doesn't have the sickness now, why would he buy it?"[10]

When Dr. Nuremberger came to Russia, he was able to carry on his research and the health of the people was greatly improved.

Shortly after India became independent, the Communist Party in India adopted an ultra-left strategy which led, after a Party-sponsored railway strike, to a general roundup and jailing of Party members in 1949. Yashpal was among those arrested. His wife, Prakashvati, appealed to Pandit Pant, then Home Minister in U.P., saying that Yashpal was not a Communist Party member. Pant responded that this was a fine point since his writings encouraged others to become Communists.[11] As a condition of his release, the government demanded that Yashpal post 100 rupees as security for good behavior. When he refused, the price was lowered to five rupees. Again he refused to pay. He was then released without payment on medical grounds and was required to leave Lucknow for six months.[12]

Yashpal made his first trip abroad as a delegate to the World Peace Congress in December, 1952. The Congress was held in Vienna with an invitation to Moscow afterwards. However, his application for a passport was denied. He called on Pandit Pant and said, "Whatever our differences are, they are between us and within our country. Do you think I would injure India outside?" Pant said no, called the appropriate ministry, and Yashpal received his passport.[13]

After this visit to Vienna and Moscow, Yashpal wrote the novel *Amitā* (1956) on an event in ancient Indian history -- the moral conversion of the Emperor Ashoka who, at the height of a career of conquest, after defeating the kingdom of Kalinga, renounced warfare, adopted Buddhism as his religion and nonviolence as his creed. It is interesting to observe that after having seen for himself the workings of a country and a system he had praised and sought to emulate, on returning to India, he seems to have looked to the power of ethical values and to have drawn on the ancient traditions of India to seek solutions to the problems of world peace. However, as will be seen later, he was not as yet unambiguous in his attitude towards violence.

As a writer of the Progressive Movement, Yashpal is and always has been deeply committed to the idea that literature should be purposeful. However, he is aware that he is subject to the criticisms that have been made of the Progressive Movement. These can be included under three broad headings -- ideological, artistic and cultural. Concerning the first, critics claim that the Progressive Movement is the literary arm of the Communist Party. Under the second, it claimed that Progressive writers focus on the crude, vulgar and even sadistic, rather than the whole, of life or the ideals of society. Under the third heading, the criticism is made that Progressive writers are attempting to plant the seeds of a foreign culture on Indian soil.

In a series of three yet-unpublished articles written between 1955 and 1966, Yashpal speaks to these criticisms and also enlarges on his ideas concerning his view of society.[14] In his first article, "Pragativādī dristikon", he suggests that those who consider the Progressive writer the instrument of the Communist Party ought first to listen to what he has to say. He asserts that the Progressive writer employs literature for the welfare of society. Since

Socialism is a constructive force and the inevitable next step in societal arrangements, and capitalism is a destructive force, the Progressive writer directs his writing to improving society by way of Socialism.

As an example, he points out through India's literary treasury that society and its ideals are always changing. As the means of life maintenance changes, ideals change. In every age it is the Progressive writer who reflects the *new* ideals. By examining the literary treasury of India one can trace the changing ideals. For example, in the era where kings were glorified as gods or thought to possess godlike qualities, the story of King Agnivarna in Kalidasa's *Raghuvansh* was told wherein the people, desiring a *darshan* of the king, worshipped the foot he put out the window for them to adore. Yashpal points out that even this offhand attention gratified the people at that time for they felt they were viewing a limb endowed with supernatural qualities, but that such conduct would be unacceptable in a king today [15] Further, the unquestioning loyalty and sacrifice of servant to master or subject to sovereign in the incident where Panna Dai sacrificed the life of her own young son that the son of the king would be spared, is unthinkable to a present-day mother. Further, says Yashpal, the writer today is not the bard who reaffirms the privilege of the ruling class, but rather a spokesman of the lower class. He is the "advocate and bard of those who stand at the mill gate to beg for their wages; those who hunger for land; those who sleep on the footpath."

In answer to those who complain that the Progressive writer plants the seeds of a foreign culture on Indian soil, Yashpal replies that to confine knowledge, culture and philosophy within geographical boundaries ignores the historical development of civilization. In seeking truth, the entire world offers a treasury of philosophy and culture. India has made her contribution to that treasury and equally has the right to draw from it. Furthermore, he says, it is not proper to speak of the culture of a particular country in terms of geography, but rather in terms of its stage of development.

One gentle word of criticism is offered to the Progressive writer -- to him Yashpal says that the writer does have the responsibility to add beauty to literature and to make a distinction between literature and political tracts.

Implicit in this essay is that the function of the Progressive writer is to oppose destructive forces (read Capitalism) and support constructive forces (read Socialism.) However, he did not confront the criticism which is often raised when discussing the differences between Marxist theory and Russian practice -- especially as it pertains to individual freedom.

He discusses this in an essay which he wrote at about the same time (the late 1950's) entitled "Vyaktigat swatantrata aur samuhik swatantrata."[16] While he agrees that in a capitalistic democracy everyone legally has equal rights, what is the meaning of equal rights to people who do not have the means for a decent living? Under capitalism, personal liberty is associated with private property rights and control over the means of production -- and that capitalists enshrine the principle of individual liberty because it protects their propertied interests. However, under Socialism, individuals trade their

control over the means of production in return for employment and means for all. Resources determine the extent of freedom, he maintains. He concludes that it is desirable for individuals to relinquish some of their freedom (power over the means of production) so that a means of livelihood will be provided for all. Without quite saying it, but by equating individual power over the means of production with civil liberties, he implies that civil liberties are a luxury of rich countries -- one which poor countries cannot afford.

During this period Yashpal wrote an essay on the occasion of his fifty-fifth birthday -- "Merī pacpanvīn varsgānth" -- discussing the current state of Indian society. He criticized Nehru for his unwillingness to proceed at a faster rate towards Socialism out of fear of violence and the loss of individual liberty. Yashpal referred to violence in this essay as follows:

> In reality, what is the meaning of the word "violence"? Please consider "violence" as synonymous with the "Use of power." Whenever you wish to criticize the use of power, you call it violence. When you wish to support the use of power and violence, you call it "a law." Does Nehru believe that he does not employ violence or power in carrying out his rule and justice? Armed police, secret police, army, prisons, and the right to arrest on suspicion -- these are all means of ruling through violence and power."[17]

Thus, at least until the latter part of the 1950s, Yashpal rationalized violence and lack of individual freedom, the former a Communist means, the latter a condition of the citizenry of Communist nations, all in terms of providing a livelihood for all.

However, it is during this period as well that he wrote "The Present Role of Progressive Writers" (1958), offering evidence that his views are changing in response to what he considers changed circumstances, or perhaps they represent his changing view of the circumstances.

> We had believed that imperialism and capitalism were bound to dwindle down by their inherent contradiction. Nobody could foresee that capitalism would learn a good deal from the Marxian expositions and try to check its disaster by the introduction of profit-sharing schemes with the workers in the form of bonuses, production and price controls, super taxes, welfare states, etc. Today we are surprised to see little conflict amongst the capitalist nations; on the other hand, there is harassing conflict in the Communist world. Once we believed that Socialism in one country was impossible. The way to Socialism was only world revolution, but Lenin revised this theory and made Socialism a success in one country. The followers of Lenin who found it necessary to reconsider and revise their theories in the changed situations found not only that coexistence of

> socialism and capitalism in the world are possible, but it was necessary to save humanity from disaster and allow its further progress. The condition and situation in this country compel us to accept that Socialism and capitalism may exist simultaneously in the same country, at least during a long transitional period. The present role of a Progressive writer is to participate in the consideration of these situations and problems through literature.[18]

Further, he chides the leadership of the Progressive writers' movement for dogmatism and narrowness and warns it of the consequences as follows:

> The essential quality of Progressive thought and literature is awareness of everchanging conditions and readiness to reconsider and revise theories on the basis of knowledge gained through social experience. Progressive thought and literature must always remain vigilant against orthodoxy and dogmatism. . . . The platform of Progressive writing in the first decade of its short life had general support and sympathy among the writers of this country. But gradually even the writers who actually produced Progressive literature became apathetic to it. The reason was that the writers and critics who were at the helm of this movement began to condemn all writing which was not in line with their concepts of proletarian revolution."[19]

The late 1950s offered a glimpse of the new humanist triumphing over the Marxist writer. During this period he journeyed to the Soviet Union for a second time -- as a delegate to the Afro-Asian writers conference in Tashkent in 1958. In that year he wrote the first volume of his greatest novel to date, *Jhūṭhā Sac*, of the events which led to the partition of the Punjab into India and Pakistan. In choosing partition as his focus, Yashpal pointed to the special disability which has plagued the Indian subcontinent to this day -- not class but religious antipathy. He described events in the Punjab in their true complexity, without reducing conflict to simplistic categories of class. This novel is his greatest, in part at least because the writer as artist was allowed to triumph over the political advocate. It is also the novel which has been translated into Russian and has enjoyed best-selling success in the Soviet Union!

Over time Yashpal has become less of an advocate and more of a mediator between the people and the progressive writers in the hope of arriving at a better understanding between the two. Progressive writers have been charged with crudeness, vulgarity, even sadism in their writing. Many critics have also suggested that if instead of concentrating their efforts on describing society in its most deficient and repulsive aspects, they wrote of society's ideals, it would go farther to improve society. In a broadcast over the radio in 1966 entitled "Sāhitya yathārthvādī ho yā ādarshvādī?," Yashpal speaks to these criticisms. He agrees that if a real situation is depicted in such a way as to produce revulsion and hostility in the reader, it has failed as a work of art. The measure of a writer's competence is the degree to which he can arouse sympathy and compassion toward the situation he wishes to correct.

However, he says, the reason why the Progressive writer chooses these very aspects of society is that these are the areas where society is deficient. It is only when the weaknesses are identified and highlighted that society will develop the ideals which will produce a better life. In this way, realism and idealism in literature are interdependent rather than mutually exclusive. Realism is the first step -- ideals follow.

In this way and others Yashpal has acted to harmonize the differences and broaden lines of communication between the Progressive writers and the public. By cautioning the Progressive leadership against dogmatism and narrowness; by insisting to the writers that political tracts are not literature and crudeness is not a sufficient condition for realistic art; and by addressing a plea to the reader to try to understand that the purpose of Progressive writing is to broaden sympathy for the underprivileged and to work toward a more equal and just society, he has been one of the movement's most able proponents.

There is no question of his courage either as a political activist in his youth or as a writer now. He has always spoken out without concern for consequences, first against the British and then against the independent Indian government. In 1938, although he believed in the principles and aims of the Communist Party, he did not join. It appears to me that the reason was that his independence and individuality were sufficiently dear to him that he could not perform that last act of faith -- to join the Party, because of the necessity that would entail of accepting Party directives. By extension, I believe he has always suffered the feeling of ambivalence towards the Communist Party and Soviet Russia that is the dilemma faced by many Indian intellectuals who are drawn to the example of the Soviet Union as a model of economic development, but want to achieve it without Soviet repression.

When I met Yashpal on his first visit to the United States in the summer of 1970, he indicated that the problem of the loss of civil liberties had always troubled him, but that in the past he had felt that it was the trade-off necessary to achieve Socialism. We discussed Indira Gandhi's recent overwhelming victory. He felt vastly encouraged that Socialism would now proceed more quickly -- and optimistic that it could be achieved within the framework of a free society.

A Postscript: In a letter I received from Yashpal on 3 March 1972, he made the following comments concerning his present thinking:

> . . . I am in favor of maximum individual liberty for all, not in favor of privileges for few on the basis of inheritance or possession of means. I do not consider Soviet economic order a model for our country. I want much more scope for personal initiative. In short, I do not consider nationalisation and socialism to be one and the same thing. I do not consider Marxism an absolute truth. Instead, I think it to be a great step which helped in breaking the obstacles created by the decaying feudalism and capitalism in further growth.

> The capitalist countries too have learned a great deal from Marxism. With the help of Marxism they have tried to solve many contradictions which had made working of capitalism in their societies impossible. This change made capitalism in these countries more tolerable and progressive for the present. I think Scandinavian countries are good example.

FOOTNOTES

1. *Sinhāvalokan*, Vol. 3, 2nd ed. (Lucknow: Viplay Karyalay, 1961), 189.

2. For this purpose, the simplest and most satisfactory description of "Socialist Realism" is as follows: "Socialist realism insists on the complete identification of literature and politics. The primary justification of its literary products is to offer ideological and practical instruction to readers and to subscribe to the moral that the Communist Party knows best." (Ernest Simmons, *Introduction to Russian Realism* [Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1967], p. 228).

3. *Sinhāvalokan*, 187.

4. *Dādā kāmred*, 6th ed. (Lucknow: Viplay Karyalay, 1959), p. 172.

5. *Ibid.*, pp. 175-76.

6. *Deshdrohī*, 6th ed. (Lucknow: Viplay Karyalay, 1961), pp. 187-89.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 244. Instead of his true motivation, Khanna here used a purely nationalistic argument, for it clearly would be unacceptable to any political group other than the Communists for India to fight to insure a Russian victory.

8. Cf. with discussion of Soviet treatment of Muslim minorities in P. Spratt, "Gandhi and the Communists," *Gandhi, India and the World*, ed. Sibnarayan Ray (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1970), pp. 212-13. Also G. Wheeler, *Racial Problems in Soviet Muslim Asia* (London: Oxford University Press, 1960), p. 61.

9. *Deshdrohī*, p. 109.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 110.

11. *Sinhavālokan*, p. 188.

12. Interview with Yashpal, August 1970.

13. *Ibid.*

14. "Pragativādī dṛiṣṭikoṇ (1955); "The Present Role of Progressive Writers" (1958); "Sahity yathārthvādī ho yā ādarshvādī" (1966).

15. Canto XIX.

16. In a collection of essays, *Bībījī kahtī hain merā cehrā robīlā hai*, 3rd ed. (Lucknow: Viplav Karyalay, 1961), pp. 29-48.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 13. To some extent this apparent ambivalence concerning violence (cf. *Amitā*) may reflect that Yashpal was torn between two conflicting objectives -- desire for peace and desire for Socialism. On the other hand, it may have reflected a dichotomy in his thinking between internal revolution and international warfare because of the much greater potential destruction associated with world conflict.

18. "The Present Role of Progressive Writers" (1958; unpublished), p. 5.

19. *Ibid.*, pp. 5-6.

20. S. H. Vatsyayan, "Hindi," *Contemporary Indian Literature, A Symposium*, 2nd ed. (New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 1959), pp. 86-87; Savitri Sinha, "Hindi" *Indian Literature*, ed. Dr. Nagendra (Delhi: Lakshmi Narian Agarwal, 1959), p. 667.

THE ASIAN STUDIES CENTER OCCASIONAL PAPERS

SOUTH ASIA SERIES

Numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 7 are out of print.

No. 6	"Bengal: Literature and History," Edward C. Dimock, Editor, Fall 1967.	$2.00
No. 8	"Community and Agricultural Development in Pakistan: Speeches of Akhter Hameed Khan" (three speeches made at Michigan State University in the fall of 1966), Winter 1969.	$1.00
No. 9	"Bengal Regional Identity," David Kopf, Editor, Spring 1969.	$2.50
No. 10	"The Punjab in Nineteenth Century Tracts: An Introduction to the Pamphlet Collections in the British Museum and India Office," by N. Gerald Barrier, Summer 1969.	$2.50
No. 11	"International Organization: A Classified Bibliography," by Harold S. Johnson and Baljit Singh, Fall 1969.	$3.00
No. 12	"Urban Bengal," Richard L. Park, Editor, Winter 1970.	$3.00
No. 13	"Bengal: East and West," Alexander Lipski, Editor, Winter 1970.	$3.00
No. 14	"The Punjab Press, 1880-1905," by N. Gerald Barrier and Paul Wallace, Summer 1970.	$3.00
No. 15	"Introduction to Oriya" and "The Oriya Writing System," by Dan M. Matson, Summer 1971.	$3.00
No. 16	"Bengal: Change and Continuity," Robert and Mary Jane Beech, Editors, Summer 1971.	$3.50
No. 17	"Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan's History of the Bijnor Rebellion," translated by Hafeez Malik and Morris Dembo, Summer 1972.	$3.50
No. 18	"Prelude to Crisis: Bengal and Bengal Studies in 1970," Peter Bertocci, Editor, Summer 1972.	$3.50
No. 19	"Political Stability and Continuity in the Indian States during the Nehru Era, 1947-1964: A Statistical Analysis," by Baljit Singh and Dhirendra K. Vajpeyi, Spring 1973.	$3.00
No. 20	"Three Essays by Akhter Hameed Khan: Land Reform, Rural Works, and the Food Problem in Pakistan," Spring 1973.	$1.50
No. 21	"West Bengal and Bangladesh: Perspectives from 1972," Barbara Thomas and Spencer Lavan, Editors, Summer 1973.	$4.00
No. 22	"Bangladesh History, Society and Culture: An Introductory Bibliography of Secondary Materials," by Peter J. Bertocci, Fall 1973.	$1.00
No. 23	"Marxist Influences and South Asian Literature," Volume I and Volume II, Winter 1974.	$6.00

EAST ASIA SERIES

No. 1	"Modern Chinese Authors: A List of Pseudonyms," by Austin C. W. Shu, Spring 1969.	$2.00
No. 2	"On Mao Tse-Tung: A Bibliographic Guide," by Austin C. W. Shu, Summer 1972.	$3.50
No. 3	"An Index to Chinese Archaeological Works Published in the Peoples Republic of China, 1949-1965," by C.M. Chen and Richard B. Stamps, Winter 1973.	$3.50